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REPORT

ON THE

IBAN OF SARAWAK

VOL. 1: IBAN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

VOL. 2: AGRICULTURE, LAND USAGE AND LAND TENURE AMONG THE IBAN

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REPORT

(Vol. 1)

F-5 IBAN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

PART I: THE IBAN BILEK-FAMILY

PART II: THE LONG-HOUSE COMMUNITY

Printed at the Government Printing Office, Kuching, Sarawak,
F. W. Lane, Government Printer.
1955.

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INTRODUCTION.

121 In September, 1948, I was appointed to undertake anthropological research in Sarawak under the auspices of the Colonial Social Science Research Council. The Secretary of the Colonial Social Science Research Council laid down as follows the nature of my research work: "a study of a traditionally based, stable, Iban community based on shifting dry rice cultivation and not subject to undue land shortage.....as described in 'A Report on the Possibilities of a Social Economic Survey of Sarawak,' by Dr. E. R. Leach."

114 I arrived in Sarawak in January, 1949, and remained in the Colony until June, 1951. For most of this period I was working among the Iban of the Baleh region of the Kapit District of the Third Division. Our base camp was at Rumah Nyala in the Sungai Sut, but field research was carried on in many other parts of the Baleh region—particularly in the headwaters of the Sungai Mujong. Visits were also made to Iban communities of the lower, middle and upper Rejang, the Katibas and Ngemah—in the Third Division, and of the Saribas and Ulu Batang Ai—in the Second Division.

121 This report is primarily an account of Iban methods of shifting dry rice cultivation in pioneer areas. It is important to note that it deals—in particular—with conditions existing in the Baleh, and with the social behaviour and customs of the Ulu Ai Iban inhabiting this region. This means that proper safeguards must be observed before applying any of the findings of this report to other Iban areas. Nevertheless, the systems it describes are generally typical of most pioneer areas (i.e. areas where virgin jungle is still being felled and farmed), and probably of about fifty to sixty percent of the Iban population of Sarawak.

Iban agriculture and Iban methods of land utilization can only be understood in relation to the various corporate groups which characterize Iban society. For this reason it has been necessary to examine briefly the principal features of Iban social organization, and the first two sections of this report are devoted to a description and analysis of the Iban *bilek-family* and the Iban long-house community. These however are really no more than prolegomena to the sections dealing with agriculture and land usage. In future studies I plan to discuss Iban social structure in greater detail, for an analysis of its basic principles is an essential foundation to the understanding of all Iban social, ritual and economic institutions.

Again, from considerations of space only passing reference has been made to the elaborate *padi* cult upon which Iban agriculture is based. Upon this fascinating and important subject I was able to collect a great mass of material and it is my intention to discuss it fully in a separate monograph, which will stand as a companion volume to this present report. As Haddon truthfully observed: "It is characteristic of the Iban.....that the whole of their life is permeated with religious conceptions, and indeed no distinction can be drawn in their daily life between technical and religious operations: they are equally necessary." It is only when the inter-dependence of economics, social organization and ritual is understood that there can be any genuine appreciation of the nature of Iban agricultural practice.

This report is concerned chiefly with a single aspect of Iban life: their system of agriculture. It should perhaps be mentioned that it represents but one of the many problems studied during the period of my field work. I intend in due course to prepare monographs and papers on many other facets of Iban society and culture. Among the subjects which I hope to discuss are: kinship and marriage, political structure, legal institutions, religious beliefs and ritual institutions, magic, spirit medium cults, head-hunting, birth rites, death rites and the cult of the dead, weaving, dreams, systems of augury, tattooing, and many other minor topics.

OC 6 I would like to express my appreciation of the various ways in which the Government of Sarawak facilitated my research work, and I am especially grateful to His Excellency Mr. A. F. Abell, C.M.G., for his action in approving an extension of my tour so that I might complete certain studies of Iban religion, and pay brief visits to parts of the Second Division.

It is difficult to speak too highly of the general hospitality, assistance and advice given to both my wife and myself during the course of our stay in Sarawak. In particular our gratitude is due to: Mr. and Mrs. B. Baughman (of the Methodist Mission, Kapit), Mr. J. C. H. Barcroft (Resident, Third Division), Father Barry (of the R.C. Mission, Kanowit), Mr. and Mrs. R. A. Bewsher (Kanowit), Mr. and Mrs. D. L. Bruen (D.O., Simanggang), Mr. W. P. N. L. Ditmas (Resident, Second Division), Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Drake-Brockman (D.O., Kanowit), Mr. and Mrs. J. Goatley (British Council, Kuching), Mr. T. Harrisson (Government Ethnologist and Curator of the Sarawak Museum), Mr. B. A. St. J. Hepburn, Mr. and Mrs. J. Hughes, Mr. D. L. Leach (Director of Lands and Surveys), Mr. C. Lightley, Mr. R. W. R. Miller (Director of Agriculture), Mr. R. H. Morris (D.O., Mukah), Mr. and Mrs. L. K. Morse (Resident, Third Division), Mr. and Mrs. William Nias (N. O., Sibu and Betong), Mr. R. Rennick, Mr. A. J. N. Richards (D.O., Kapit), Mr. P. Ringkai, Mr. P. Smith (D.O., Kapit), Mr. B. E. Smythies (Forestry Officer, Third Division), Mr. I. A. N. Urquhart (D.O., Kapit), Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Waine (D. O., Sibu), and Dr. and Mrs. E. H. Wallace (Medical Officer, Third Division).

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OSO I am also immensely indebted to Iban too numerous to mention by name for their generous hospitality and great helpfulness at all stages of my research work. Better friends one could not wish to have.

For most valuable guidance and encouragement during months of preparation, during the whole of the time I was in the field, and during the months which have elapsed since my return I am deeply grateful to Dr. Edmund Leach, Reader in Anthropology at the University of London. From his general supervision of my research I have drawn benefit in innumerable ways. My sincere thanks are also due to Professor Meyer Fortes (William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge) for much helpful counsel and criticism.

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April, 1953.

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PART 1

THE IBAN BILEK-FAMILY.

1. The most salient characteristic of Iban social organization is the practice of long-house domicile. Anyone who has travelled in the interior of Borneo is familiar with the conspicuous shape of a long-house: an attenuated structure supported on innumerable hard-wood posts, it stretches for a hundred yards or more along the terraced bank of a river, its roof—of thatch, or wooden shingles—forming an unbroken expanse. Superficially viewed the Iban long-house has the appearance of being a single structural unit, and many casual observers have made the facile inference that the long-house is therefore the outcome of some sort of communal or group organization and ownership.(1) For the Iban, at least, this inference is the very reverse of true. Among the various families which make up a long-house community there does exist a network of kinship ties, but the Iban long-house is primarily an aggregation of independently owned family apartments. The fact that these apartments are joined one to the other as to produce a long-house detracts little from their essential autonomy. Indeed the unbroken expanse of roof tends to conceal the fact that the Iban long-house is fundamentally a series of discrete entities—the independent family units of a competitive and egalitarian society.

2. A long-house, then, is made up of a series of independently owned family apartments which are joined longitudinally one to the other so as to produce a single attenuated structure. Long-houses do, however, vary very considerably in size: from houses of three or four family apartments and scarcely over a chain in length, to houses that sprawl for more than three hundred yards along the bank of a river and contain upwards of forty different family sections. But before discussing in detail the overall composition of the long-house, let us first turn to a brief examination of the distinct sections or apartments from which every long-house is constructed. Each of these apartments is owned and occupied by a particular family group, and these family groups are the basic corporate units of Iban society. The principal divisions of a family apartment are:

(*a*) the *bilek*, or living room,

(*b*) the *sadau*, or loft,

(*c*) the *ruai*, or roofed gallery,

(*d*) *tanju*, or open platform.

All of these are shown in Fig. 1.

The bilek.

3. Of these four parts the most important is the *bilek*, which is the family living room, and the place where the valued property of the family is stored. Each *bilek* is divided off from the *ruai* by a substantial wall of wooden planks, and side walls separate each *bilek* from the rooms on either side of it. Each *bilek* has one main entrance on to the *ruai*, with a hinged door of wooden slabs that is normally kept closed. At night it is usual for these doors to be barred from the inside. It is also fairly common for the side walls of a *bilek* to be broken by smaller doors or openings, so providing inter-communication between the family apartments of the long-house. But this practice is far from universal; internal doors or openings are only found if the neighbouring families are closely related (e.g. siblings or close cousins), or if they are on particularly friendly terms with one another. On several occasions I witnessed the blocking up of these internal openings following a dispute and quarrelling between neighbouring families. The *bilek* of a long-house always vary slightly in size, and the width of the wall facing on to the *ruai* is some indication of the economic status of the family that owns it. In Rumah Nyala, of the Sungai Sut, the smallest *bilek* was 12ft. 6ins. wide by 16ft. deep, while the largest was 23ft. wide by 17ft. 6ins. deep. The larger *bilek* of Rumah Tungku—a fifty door long-house of the Sungai Tiau—measured 25ft. wide by 24ft. deep.

4. The *bilek* is the normal location for cooking, eating, sleeping and a multitude of domestic tasks. Each *bilek* is equipped with its own cooking place, or *dapur*, which traditionally is situated at the front of the *bilek* against the dividing wall with the *ruai*. It consists of a rough scaffolding of wood which supports a raised hearth of packed clay, and some feet above, a wide rack on which fire wood is stacked ready for use. At this hearth the women boil rice—the staple food of the Iban—and prepare the relishes which accompany it. In the ordinary course of events, all the members of family—men, women, and children—eat together in their *bilek*, squatting in a circle around the meal which has been laid out in the centre of the room. At nights, finely plaited mats are spread, mosquito curtains suspended, and the *bilek* becomes the sleeping place of all but the young unmarried men, who more often favour the open gallery, or *ruai* of the long-house. At the back of the *bilek*, and frequently along both its sides, are stacked the huge jars (*tajau*) and bronze gongs (*tawak*) which constitute the main capital resources of a family, and its chief form of inheritable property. Kept carefully packed away in wooden trunks, or securely wrapped in bark-cloth are the hand-woven fabrics (*pua kumbo* and *kain kebat*), used only on ritual and gala occasions, which are another of the important indications of the wealth and status of an Iban family. Ranged in racks around the walls are plates and bowls, and an extraodinary medley of minor possessions.

The sadau.

5. Above each *bilek*, and jutting out over the *ruai*, is the *sadau*, which is a kind of garret or loft. Here, in immense bark bins, is stored the *padi* grown by the members of the *bilek*. A series of smaller containers hold the carefully selected seed (each family possesses many different types of *padi*), to be used at the next sowing. Most important of all these is the seed of the *padi pun*—

(1) Baring-Gould and Bampfylde, 1909, p. 27.

342 a singular variety of inherited rice—which is the centre of the elaborate fertility cult upon which
251 Iban agriculture is based. Also in the *sadau* are kept the various implements used in farming, and the mats, baskets and trays used when *padi* is being husked and winnowed.

The ruai.

342 6. The door of each family *bilek* opens on to another section known as the *ruai*, which is always of about the same area as the *bilek*, and which—like the *bilek*—is the private property of the family to which it belongs. In an Iban house of traditional design, the division between the *bilek* and the *ruai* is marked by the main supporting post (*tiang bumbong*) of the ridge-pole; thus the rear half of the ridged roof covers the *bilek* while the front half covers the *ruai*. Unlike the *bilek*, a family's *ruai* has no side walls, so that all these independently owned sections are joined to produce a continuous, roofed gallery, which runs the entire length of the long-house. Throughout its length the *ruai* maintains a fairly constant width. In Rumah Nyala, for example, the average width of the *ruai* was about 23ft., while in Rumah Tungku it was 25ft. The *ruai* serves many purposes. Three principal parts may be distinguished. Immediately adjacent to the wall dividing the *bilek* from the *ruai*, is a section about three to four feet in width, known as the *tempuan lesong*.
252 Here stands the *lesong*, a large wooden mortar, in which the women of the family pound their *padi* with long hard-wood poles, so to husk it. Most of these *padi* mortars are fitted with sounding boards which, vibrating in time to the pounding poles, send a lively, staccato rhythm reverberating through the surrounding hills. Here also, in the *tempuan lesong*, firewood is stacked, and fighting cocks are tethered.

342 7. Adjoining this narrow strip comes another section, usually about 10 to 12 feet in width, and completely unobstructed by posts or partitions; it thus forms a common corridor giving access to all parts of the long-house. It is, in fact, a kind of village street, and except on ritual occasions when a family may cordon off its own particular portion, it is used by all the members of the community as a kind of general thoroughfare. The flooring of this corridor section is usually made from bamboo slats, which are springy to the tread. The *ruai* also serves many other purposes in addition to those of a street. It is the site of many domestic occupations; it is here, for example, that women suspend the frames on which to process their cotton (*nyikat ubong*), and later, set up their weaving looms. When religious rituals (*gawai*) are held, the *ruai* is the place where the all-important shrines (*ranyai*) are erected, and it is also the pathway for ceremonial processions (*niti daun* and *ngerandang*), and the invocation of the gods (*timang*). Here too, the spirit mediums (*manang*) perform their principal rites, and here the bodies of the dead are laid during the period of public mourning and ritual wailing which precedes burial.

8. One side of this corridor or 'street' is flanked by the entrances to the various *bilek*, or family rooms, and on the other it is skirted by a series of open spaces which extend to a low wall right under the eaves of the long-house roof. Each family possesses one of these open rectangular spaces, known as *padong ruai*. Varying in width in accordance with the *bilek* of which it is an extension, but always having a regular depth—usually about eight to ten feet—the *padong ruai* is one of the most important parts of the long-house. Floored with adzed, wooden planks, and furnished with huge *rotan* mats, it is the place where the people of the house, and particularly the men, spend most of their leisure time. The various *padong ruai* of a long-house are the main centres of community life and social intercourse. Here meetings (*baum*) are held, and disputes formally heard and settled. Here guests are welcomed with tobacco and betel, and offerings to the gods preformed. The cool and convivial *ruai* is also the site for many minor tasks: the place where nets are knotted, knife handles and sheaths carved, mats plaited, and cotton tied ready for
[521] dyeing. At nights it is the place where the men gather in informal groups to talk about their *padi* farms (a perennial topic of conversation), to discuss an omen or a dream, or merely to gossip, avidly and aimlessly. It is on the *ruai* too, and in the evenings, that the enthralling sagas (*ensera*)
[538] of the Iban are chanted and recited—sagas which tell of the fantastic adventures and miraculous
[573] feats of their culture heroes, the Orang Panggau. By young and unmarried men, the *padong ruai* is commonly used—despite the prowling dogs—as a sleeping place, and sometimes they construct
[178] for themselves, at the very edge of the *ruai*, and under the eaves of the roof, special bunk-like enclosures, termed *agu*. The line between the corridor and the *padong ruai* is marked by a row of secondary supporting posts, which also stand at the edge of the projecting *sadau*, or loft. Close to these posts, and in tangled, smoke-blackened clusters, hang the highly prized heads, or *antu pala*,
[354] with which so many of the most cherished values and beliefs of the Iban are associated. Beneath each such cluster of heads is a hearth (*bedilang*) of stone or clay, on which fires are kindled—both on chilly nights, and during certain head-hunting rituals. It is important to note that these heads (*antu pala*) are always the property of one particular family, and are never owned by the long-house group as a whole.

9. Like the *bilek*, of which it is an extension, each section of the *ruai* (composed of the
423 three divisions just described) is owned by a particular family. It is the duty of each family to keep
342 its section of the corridor or long-house 'street' in good repair so that all may use it. But this general use involves no diminution of ownership rights; each family retains the right to cordon off its section of the *ruai* during the performance of certain rituals, and on other occasions to insist (on the pain of fine) that prohibitions governing its use be fully observed by all members of the long-house community. The boundaries of each family section of the *ruai* are clearly marked by the main supporting posts of the long-house structure, but quite often dwarf walls (12 to 18 inches in height) are erected on the *padong ruai*. These plank partitions, which make convenient back rests, further demarcate the various family sections.

The tanju.

342 10. Beyond the *ruai*, and so not covered by any form of roof, is the *tanju*, an open platform, usually about 20 to 25 feet wide. As with the corridor of the *ruai*, all the independently owned sections of the *tanju* are joined to form an unbroken, raised platform, which fronts the whole

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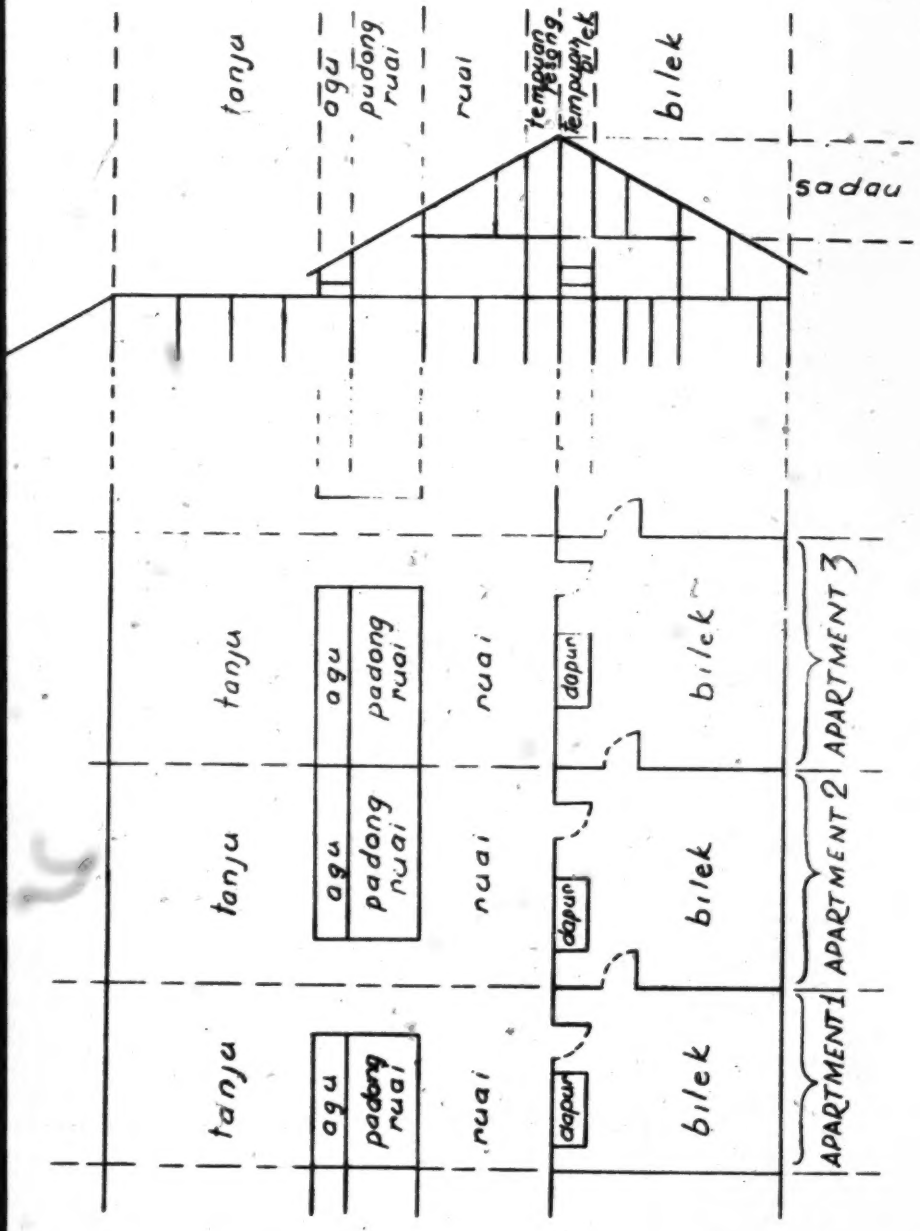
Figure 1a



PLAN of an IBAN LONG-HOUSE
(Rumah Tungka, Sungai Tiau)
Scale – 0 5 10 15 20 feet

342 long-house. At its outer edge (the front of the house) there is usually some kind of a railing, which at regular intervals is broken by the main entrances to the long-house. These consist of deeply notched hard-wood logs (*tangga*), which lead down—often at a steep angle—to paths ending at the river's edge. Ideally, a *tanju* is constructed from slats of iron-wood (*Eusideroxylon zwageri*), which can withstand for many years the extremes of the Borneo climate. A *tanju* is in constant use, for it is the place where, after the harvest, a family's *padi* is dried and winnowed prior to storing, and where, every few days, small quantities of *padi* are sunned before being pounded and sifted in readiness for cooking. Again it is on the *tanju* that the women's cotton is exposed to the cooling night dew, and the blazing midday sun, during the prolonged and intricate ritual that precedes dyeing.

342 11. It is the joining together of a number of different family apartments which produces the
621 attenuated structure known as a long-house. As has been stressed, each apartment (consisting of *bilek*, *sadau*, *ruai* and *tanju*), is independently owned, and it follows from this that the general maintenance and repair of each section is always the responsibility of one particular family. Anyone familiar with the Iban will have observed the considerable range of variation among the different family apartments of a long-house; apartments roofed with meticulously made shingles may be found interspersed with apartments roofed with hastily improvised thatch; a *tanju* of well adzed iron-wood slats may be found side by side with one roughly made from split bamboos, so rotted as to imperil anyone who treads them. A long-house then, consists of a series of discrete sections joined roof to roof so as to produce a single architectural unit. And each of these apartments is the private property of a particular family. A long-house community is thus, in essence, a village consisting of a single street of attached houses. Let us now examine more closely the various family units of which a long-house community is composed—the houses, as it were, within the village—for these are basic corporate groups of Iban social and economic life.

The Iban bilek-family.

592 12. In Government and other publications the family apartments of an Iban long-house are commonly referred to as "doors". A long-house, that is, is usually described as consisting of so many doors—10 doors, 20 doors, or whatever the number may be. This term has the advantage that it may be applied to any of the indigenous peoples of Borneo that live in long-houses, but in this report—which is concerned exclusively with the Iban—I propose to employ the term *bilek*. *Bilek* is the word which the Iban use to describe the separate enclosed rooms of a long-house, but it is also a term used, by the Iban themselves, to refer to the family group which owns and occupies one apartment of a long-house, as, for example, in the phrases: "*Nya umai kami se bilek*" ("That is the farm of our *bilek*, or family"), and "*Kami se bilek tabin magang*" ("We, a *bilek-family*, are all ill"). The family group, described in the phrase: "*kami se bilek*" (we, the members of a *bilek*), is the basic unit of Iban social and economic organization. In the discussion that follows, I shall refer to this unit as the *bilek-family*.

13. The members of a *bilek-family* are always intimately related by ties of kinship and affinity, but it is a unit primarily defined by the criterion of local residence. Its members—as a group—own and occupy one, and only one, of the separate family apartments of a long-house, each apartment consisting of *bilek*, *sadau*, *ruai* and *tanju*, as described. The *bilek-family* is also a domestic family; that is, its members constitute a single household. Food is prepared and cooked for the *bilek-family* as a whole, and its members usually eat together, sharing a common meal. The *bilek-family* is also an allodial unit, possessing both land and property in its own right. It is likewise an independent entity economically, cultivating its own *padi*, and a wide variety of other crops. Ritually, each *bilek-family* is a disparate unit with its own magical charms (*pengaroh*), its own particular set of ritual prohibitions or taboos (*pemali*), and its own special kind of sacred *padi* (*padi pun*). Among the Iban there are no clans or other large-scale corporate kin groups, and so the *bilek-family* is a social unit of primary and paramount importance.

592 14. The *bilek-family* has two dominant characteristics: it is a small group numerically, and
162 a simple one genealogically. Table 1, shows the range in numerical composition of the *bilek-families* of three long-house communities in the Baleh are: Rumah Nyala (25 doors), of the Sungai Sut, Rumah Sibat (32 doors), of the Sungai Melinau, and Rumah Tungku (50 doors), of the Sungai Tiau.(2) These three long-houses are discrete entities both territorially and socially, and they may be regarded as constituting a reliable sample for an examination of the social organization of the Iban of the middle and upper Rejang.

Table 1. Numerical Composition of the Bilek-family.

Number of persons in bilek-family:	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	14
Frequency: R. Nyala	—	7	3	4	3	2	2	1	3	—	—	—
R. Sibat	3	2	7	4	9	4	—	—	3	—	—	—
R. Tungku	2	4	9	9	6	7	7	1	3	—	1	1
Totals:	5	13	19	17	18	13	9	2	9	—	1	1

(2) These data refer to the composition of Rumah Nyala as on 1st May, 1950; Rumah Sibat as on 1st September, 1950; and Rumah Tungku as on 1st July, 1950.

592 162 594 It will be observed that 80 of the 107 *bilek-families* of the sample—that is, approximately 75%—fall within the range of three to seven members per family. The mode is four, and the median is five persons per *bilek*. For the three long-houses, the arithmetical mean is 5.75 persons per bilek-family. This accords closely with other data available for the Baleh region. Thus, the figure for Penghulu Jenggut's district, comprising 32 different long-houses was 5.78 persons per door; while that for Penghulu Grinang's district (of 29 long-houses) was also 5.75.(3) This average figure of 5.75(4) includes people of all ages—men, women and children—the aged and infirm as well as infants in arms. In the three long-houses of our sample, with a total population of 615, some 224 persons, or just over 36% were fifteen years of age and under. The aged (those over 65 years of age, that is, who are no longer able to undertake the heavy work of farming), and the disabled, account for about another 4% of the total.(5) When it is realised that among the Iban the *bilek-family* is the basic unit in agriculture as in all other activities, it will become apparent that its limited size is a factor of crucial importance in all economic pursuits. This situation will be discussed in detail at a later stage.

15. The genealogical composition of the 107 *bilek-families* under discussion is shown in Table 2. Adopted children are included.

Table 2: Genealogical Composition of the Bilek-family.

Type of bilek family.	*Rumah Nyola.*	*Rumah Sibat.*	*Rumah Tungku.*	*Totals.*	*Approximate Percentage.*
Man and wife. (no children)	—	2	1	3	3%
Parents (or parent), and child or children.	9	13	16	38	35%
Grandparent(s), and child or children (& spouses), and grandchild or grandchildren.	13	11	23	47	44%
Great-grandparent, children (& spouses), grandchildren (& spouses), and great grandchildren.	1	1	6	8	7%
Grandparents and grandchild.	1	—	—	1	1%
Great-grandparents, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.	—	2	—	2	2%
Parents and child or children, and sibling of one of parents.	1	1	3	5	5%
Grandparents, child or children, grandchildren, and sibling of one of grandparents.	—	2	1	3	3%
Totals:	25	32	50	107	100%

It will be seen that the most prevalent type of family group is that containing three generations, that is, grandparents, parents and children (47 instances); and this is followed by the elementary family, composed of parents and their children (8 instances). These two categories account for about 80% of the 107 *bilek-families* of our sample. Moreover the remaining instances —as will be readily seen—are all very simple and consistent variants of these two main categories. Eight *bilek-families* contained individuals of four consecutive generations; and there were three instances of married couples without children, who had recently established their own *bileks*.

594 591 16. In other words the Iban *bilek-family* is essentially based on the simple or elementary family consisting of a father and a mother and their children. Iban society—as will have become apparent—is rigorously monogamous, and so there are no compound families. Again, the development of extended families is precluded by a strong tendency towards partition as soon as a *bilek-family* increases in size and collateral elementary families begin to emerge. Thus, in the three long-houses under discussion (comprising 107 *bilek-families*), there was not a single instance of married siblings possessing adult children, and yet still living together as members of the same *bilek-family*.(6) And further, there were only four instances of siblings remaining members of

(3) These figures, which are for the year 1948, were obtained from official records at Kapit fort.

(4) It would seem that this average size of the *bilek-family* is typical for Iban society as a whole. A comparison is possible with the Saribas—an area of marked cultural change. Investigations which I made at Gansurai (19 doors), of Sungai Layar, and Plandok (13 doors), of Sungai Paku, showed averages of 5.1 and 6.0 respectively.

(5) All data in this report concerning ages of Iban are careful estimates only. Illiteracy was (1949-51) universal in the Baleh area, and no birth records existed. However by a careful checking of genealogical information against known historical events (e.g. Government expeditions, the arrival and departure of District Officers, the doings of prominent Iban, etc., as recorded in the *Sarawak Gazette*, and elsewhere), it was possible to reach fairly accurate conclusions.

(6) Nor did I encounter an instance of this in Iban communities in any other part of Sarawak.

the same *bilek-family*—after the death of both of their parents. It will be observed that in many ways the Iban family resembles the domestic family as it exists in English society. But there are significant differences. Most importantly, among the Iban, at least one of the children of a family, when he or she reaches maturity and marries, always remains in the parents' *bilek*. All the other children of the family may marry out and so become members of other units, but one always stays in the natal *bilek*. In this way the Iban *bilek-family* achieves a continuity through time, as from one generation to the next, one elementary family grows out of, and succeeds another, in an unbroken sequence. Thus, except for new *bileks*, which are the outcome of recent partition, most *bilek-families* could extend through three generations and sometimes through four. This continuity through time of the *bilek-family* is a cardinal feature of Iban social structure. While birth, marriage and death regularly modify the personnel of the *bilek-family*, the complex property and other rights which give the *bilek-family* its separate identity are not affected. It is primarily as an allodial unit that the *bilek* persists from generation to generation.

17. At any given moment in time, every Iban—man, woman, or child—is a member of one particular *bilek-family*, and one only. How then does an individual become a member of a *bilek-family*? What are the principles of recruitment? An individual gains membership of his or her *bilek* in one of four ways: by being born into it, by being adopted into it, by marrying into it, or by being incorporated into it. It is possible therefore to classify the 615 members of the 107 *bilek-families* of Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku under these four headings, and this has been done in Table 3.

TABLE. 3.

Principle of Recruitment to Bilek-family.	*Number of Individuals.*	*Percentage of Total.*
Birth	418	67.9%
Adoption	53	8.6%
Marriage	140	22.7%
Incorporation	4	.6%

Let us now briefly consider these different principles of recruitment to membership of the *bilek-family*.

Birth.

18. Every individual in Iban society is born into one particular *bilek*, and this is just as likely to be the bilek of the child's father as it is to be the *bilek* of the child's mother, for virilocal and uxorilocal marriages(7) occur with very nearly equal incidence. However a child does not always grow up and come to maturity in the *bilek* in which he was born. It may happen that his parents decide to change their place of abode, and so abandon virilocal or uxorilocal residence, or vice versa. It is perfectly permissible for a child to claim membership, by right of birth, of either his father's or his mother's *bilek*, but effective membership can only be established by actual residence sustained over a prolonged period. This means that sooner or later a decision must be made one way or the other, for it is not possible for a child to become a resident member of both *bileks*. In the event, of course, a child does not have any choice in the matter for the decision rests with his parents, who, for multifarious reasons, elect to practice either uxorilocal or virilocal residence.

19. The *bilek-family* of which a child is a member by right of birth, and in which he grows up, we may term his *natal bilek*. It may be either the *bilek* of his mother, or the *bilek* of his father, but one or the other it must be. This is one aspect of the ambilateral principle which is the dominant characteristic of Iban social organization. By the term *ambilateral* we mean to denote a system of social organization in which an individual can possess membership of *either* his father's *or* his mother's birth group (i.e. the *bilek-family* among the Iban), *but not of both at the same time*. It will be observed that two entirely disparate criteria are implicit in this formulation: (a) the criterion of descent, and (b) the criterion of local residence. By birth every individual is potentially a member of either his father's or his mother's *bilek-family*, but the necessity of a single place of local residence means that each individual does in fact become a member of *only one* of these two groups. In short, although filial consanguinity is an indispensable qualification for *bilek-family* membership, it is the fact of local residence which ultimately determines the group to which a child belongs.

20. This does not mean that kinship ties with one of the two groups are abandoned or allowed to atrophy. Should, for example, a child become a member of his mother's *bilek-family* ties of kinship (though less intimate in nature) are actively maintained with his father's kin. The precise extent to which these ties are maintained depends very largely on the accessibility of the father's immediate kin. If the father be a member of the same long-house community there is every opportunity for mutual intercourse between the two groups of kinsfolk, and close and affectionate

(7) In anthropological literature marriage is commonly defined as patrilocal when the couple lives in the same household as the husband's parents, and matrilocal when the couple lives in the household of the wife's parents. These terms are adequate for societies with unilineal descent groups, but for a society such as that of the Iban, the terms virilocal (living in husband's household) and uxorilocal (living in wife's household) are preferable.

612 relationships will develop between a child and his paternal grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. Often however, the father will have come from a far away long-house, only to be reached after several days of arduous and hazardous travelling, and so it happens that some children meet their paternal kinsfolk very rarely indeed, and then, only when they are well grown up and able to undertake the difficult journey involved. The same sort of circumstances apply to children living as members of their father's *bilek-family*, for women also frequently marry into different or distant long-houses. Still, wherever conditions make it feasible relationships on both the paternal and the maternal sides are actively fostered and sustained. We may sum up the situation by saying that whereas the principle governing the formation of the *bilek-family* is *ambilateral*, the principle on which the wider system of kinship is based is *bilateral*. This wider system of kinship will be discussed in due course.

591 611 21. A child, we have said, is just as likely to be a member of his mother's birth group as he is to be a member of his father's birth group. This is demonstrated in Table 4. This Table shows those *bilek-families* in which both parents are still living and which contain one or more children under 20 years of age born of their union. All such cases occurring in the three long-houses: Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, are included.(8)

TABLE 4.

Name of long-house.	*Bilek-families in which children are living as members of mother's birth group.*	*Bilek-families in which children are living as members of father's birth group.*
R. Nyala	6	13
R. Sibat	10	9
R. Tungku	16	7
Totals:	32	29

All the families appearing in this Table were observed at first hand. The even balancing of the two types of group is clearly demonstrated: families in which children are living as members of the mother's birth group make up approximately 52% of the total, while those in which children are living as members of the father's birth group comprise about 48%. The almost equal prominence of males and females in the processes of group formation, as in virtually all social processes is one of the most salient characteristics of Iban society. As will become apparent this is a consistent outcome of the principles of ambilateral filiation which underlie Iban social structure.

Adoption.

597 22. Among the Iban adoption is a common occurrence. Two types may be distinguished:

(a). extra-*bilek* adoption;

(b). intra-*bilek* adoption.

23. By *intra-bilek adoption*, is meant adoption that occurs within the confines of a particular *bilek-family*. It almost always takes the form of a childless adult sibling taking over the care of one of the children of another sibling of the same *bilek-family*. In other words, the adopted child (*anak ambo*) remains a member of the same domestic group as his true father and mother, and his other brothers and sisters. Such an adopted child is already a member of this *bilek-family* by right of birth, and it is this fact which defines his status even after adoption. Intra-*bilek* adoptions are to be considered therefore, as special relationships arising out of recruitment to *bilek* membership by process of birth, and it is under this heading that they are properly included. In the three long-houses: Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, there were 11 instances of intra-*bilek* adoption, and they occurred in 10, or 9.3% of the 107 *bilek-families* of the three communities.

24. *Extra-bilek adoption* is an entirely different process, for here the adopted individual is always a member of some other *bilek-family*. The status of such an individual (*anak ambo*), within the adoptive *bilek-family*, is essentially determined by the fact of his or her adoption, although very close ties of kinship do very often exist. There were, in all, 53 cases of extra-*bilek* adoption in the three long-houses: Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, which means that about 8.6% of the members of the three communities had gained membership of their particular *bilek-family* by process of adoption. These 53 cases of adoption were to be found in 39, or 36.4% of the 107 *bilek-families* of our sample. Table 5 shows the incidence of extra-*bilek* adoption in further detail.

(8) Adoptions, divorced men and women with children, and widows and widowers with children, are excluded.

TABLE 5. Extra-bilek Adoption.

Instances of extra-bilek adoption.	*R. Nyala*	*R. Sibat*	*R. Tungku*	Totals
Males	11	7	10	28
Females	4	6	15	25
Totals:	15	13	25	53
Number of bilek-families in which extra-bilek adoption occurred.	14	9	16	39
Percentage of bilek-families in which extra-bilek adoption occurred. ..	56%	28%	32%	*General Average:* 36%

25. What are the conditions which result in this high incidence of extra-bilek adoption? Among the Iban the marriage rate is a very high one. In the three long-house communities which constitute our sample, there were some 239 persons over 30 years of age, and of these there were only three individuals—all of them men—who had not, at some time, been married. Furthermore, of these three, one was blind and the other two were mentally defective. On the basis of our sample it would seem that all normal individuals become married at some stage of their lives, though for a considerable proportion a state of permanent divorce eventually ensues. The marital status of the 239 individuals over 30 years of age, mentioned above, was as follows:

TABLE 6. Marital Status of Individuals 31 Years of Age and Over.

Marital Status.	*Number of Individuals.*	*Percentage. (Approx.)*
Married	150	62%
Widows and Widowers	49	21%
Not yet married	3	1%
Divorced—but living with offspring by previous marriage	21	9%
Divorced—but having an adopted child ..	6	3%
Divorced—and having no children ..	10	4%

Despite the high marriage rate, childless unions—resulting either from sterility or infant mortality—are fairly common. Thus a count of all the long-standing contemporary marriages (marriages, that is, of 10 years and more duration; both husband and wife still living) shows that about 20% of them are childless. These are the couples that, in the absence of children of their own, have recourse to adoption.

26. Mention has been made of the way in which the *bilek-family* persists through time as an allodial unit. If this process is to continue without intermission, the family must perpetuate itself; each generation must produce the children who are to inherit the *bilek* and its valuables in the next. It is possible for a family to fail in this task, and so to become extinct. The Iban use the word *punas*, meaning sterile, to describe this event, as in the phrase: "*Bilek sida udah punas*" (Their *bilek-family* has become extinct"). It must not be thought however that the extinction of a *bilek-family* is a common process; on the contrary, such a happening is extremely rare, for every effort is made to avoid so ignominious a fate. In the last resort, the one or two remaining survivors will seek amalgamation with some other *bilek-family*, but the preferable and more usual course is to augment the dwindling family by the adoption of new members. In most cases children are adopted, but instances of adults being adopted do sometimes occur. An analysis of the 53 extra-*bilek* adoptions appearing in Table 5, shows that about 70% of them were made by persons having no children of their own. This percentage demonstrates clearly the principal motive prompting adoption. Adoption enables childless couples to escape from their predicament. The children which they adopt and rear can be relied upon to care for their adoptive parents in their old age. In Iban society, based as it is on a subsistence economy, the aged have no one to look to but their own or their adopted children, and their grandchildren, within the *bilek-family*. In due course, the children which a couple adopt will become their heirs, inheriting the *bilek* and all the property it contains, and so ensuring its survival as an independent unit. In a limited number of cases adoption saves the *bilek* from extinction. Thus of the 107 *bilek-families* of the three long-house communities: Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, some 17, or approximately 16%, depended on an adoption for their future existence.

27. It is significant to note that the great majority of adoptions are between close kin. It was possible to collect detailed and reliable information for 48 of the 53 extra-*bilek* adoptions appearing in Table 5. An analysis of these 48 cases shows 58% of them were adoptions of the child of sibling (though living in another *bilek*), while 29% were children of either first, second or third cousins. A further 10% were children of persons recognised as kindred (*kaban*)—though more remote than third cousins. There was only one adoption where no kind of consanguineous relationship existed. This was the female descendant of a Kayan slave, who had been adopted from closely related kin. In Table 7, these various types of relationship are laid out in detail.

TABLE 7. EXTRA-BILEK ADOPTION.

Relationship of adopted individual.	*Incidence:*		
	Males.	*Females.*	*Totals.*
Child of sibling	14	14	28
Child of first cousin	3	4	7
Child of second cousin	3	2	5
Child of third cousin	1	1	2
Child of more remote relatives	3	2	5
Child of an 'adopted' Kayan slave	—	1	1
Totals	24	24	48

28. Adoption is far from being an haphazard affair. On the contrary, it is always accompanied by a definite agreement (*danyi*) between the two *bilek-families* concerned. To achieve this a public meeting (*baum*) is held on the *ruai* of the long-house. It is attended by the senior members of both the *bilek-families* immediately concerned, by other kindred and by anyone else interested. The principal reason why such meetings are made public is to ensure that there are a number of witnesses to the agreement reached; these witnesses will then be available to give evidence should a dispute subsequently arise. According to Iban custom (*adat*) an adopted individual has precisely the same rights within the *bilek-family*, as have those who are born members. The public discussion that accompanies an adoption is chiefly concerned with the reiteration and exemplification of this fundamental principle.[3] Following the overt agreement of both parties to this principle, which represents the safeguarding of the adopted individual's rights of inheritance, it is usual to mark the event by certain ritual observances. Food offerings (*piring*) are proffered to the gods and libations poured, while prayers and blessings are uttered. Finally a cock is sacrificed and its blood smeared on the forehead of the child being adopted, and on the foreheads of those who are adopting him. The purpose of these acts of supplication and consecration is to ensure that the adoption will be an auspicious one. Occasionally an adoption is arranged even prior to a child's birth. In such cases presentations of rice and other kinds of property are made to the mother during pregnancy and during the time she is nursing the child; and when the actual adoption takes place a further ritual presentation—'in payment for the mother's milk'—is made.

29. Adoption, as we have noted, confers the same rights as does birth. When the proper agreement (*danyi*) has been made, and the prescribed rituals performed, an individual is absorbed into full jural membership of his or her adoptive *bilek-family*. This severing of membership of the natal *bilek* and absorption into the adoptive *bilek* is graphically symbolized in the *nutop ayu* ritual which very frequently accompanies the ceremony of adoption. According to Iban belief, every person has a *semengat*, or separable soul. This *semengat*, during life, inhabits the body, though it does have the power of wandering abroad; and dream experiences, say the Iban, are evidence of this. But in addition to the *semengat*, there is another entity called the *ayu*, which is a kind of secondary soul or soul-substitute. Everyone has both a *semengat* and an *ayu*; as an old *manang*, or spirit-medium, put it: "Our *semengat* and *ayu* share the same breath" ("*Semengat enggau ayu kitai saum seput.*") But the *ayu* does not reside in the body. It takes the form of a kind of plant—it is usually likened to the bamboo (*buloh*) in appearance—and it is believed to grow on a far off mountain. On the slopes of this vast mountain grow the myriad *ayu* of all the Iban people, and there they are tended by an aged and benificent supernatural being named Manang Betuah. The *ayu* of each *bilek-family* are conceived of as growing in a separate and compact clump, and when a child is born a new shoot appears at the base of the clump, just as it does with the bamboo plant itself. The health of the various members of a family—so it is believed—is controlled in a kind of magical symbiosis by the state of growth of their various *ayu*. If, for

example, the *ayu* should become overgrown with creepers, the individual whose soul-substitute it is, will become ill; and spirit-mediums (*manang*) are frequently commissioned to visit the *ayu* of sick persons to free them from encumbrances, and generally to tend them. It is the soul of the spirit-medium that carries out this task, while the spirit-medium himself is in a state of trance. The purpose of the *nusop ayu* ritual, which often accompanies adoption, is the cutting away of the child's *ayu* from the *ayu* clump of his natal group, and the replanting of it with the *ayu* clump of his adoptive *bilek-family*. The transplanting ritual is performed by a spirit-medium, who receives a special fee in return for his services. The child himself is given three articles: a bush-knife (*duku*), a small jar (*jugok*), and a fathom of cloth. Each of these objects has a symbolic meaning. The knife symbolizes the cutting away of the child's *ayu*; the jar (termed in this context, *kurong semengat*) is a cask providing magical protection for the soul, or *semengat*, of the child; while the length of cloth forms a covering for the freshly transplanted *ayu* of the child, to shade it and so prevent it becoming shrivelled in the heat of the sun (*"Enggau nudong, enggai ka iya engga panas"*). The *nusop ayu* ritual is an interesting illustration of the fact that adoption involves the creation of membership rights in an individual's natal group, and the assumption of exactly similar rights in his adoptive *bilek-family*. And to this must be added the important corollary that in all matters of inheritance and succession, claims based on birth or adoption are of equal validity. These rules governing adoption are two of the basic principles of Iban social structure.

Marriage.

30. We have now examined briefly two of the processes of recruitment: birth and adoption. Full membership of a *bilek-family* may also be attained by marrying into it. Marriage, indeed, is a factor of crucial importance in determining the composition of *bilek-families*. The Iban are a rigorously monogamous people, and when he marries an Iban has two courses of action open to him: he may bring his wife to live as a member of his own natal or adoptive *bilek* (i.e. in-marriage), or he may move to the natal or adoptive *bilek* of his wife (i.e. out-marriage). A woman when she marries is faced with a similar choice: she may take up residence either in her own *bilek*, or in that of her husband. Iban custom does ordinarily permit the marriage of first cousins (*petunggal diri meseyadi*), but marriage between first cousins who are resident members of the same *bilek-family* never takes place. From this fact that marriage never occurs within the confines of a single *bilek-family*, it follows that every marriage necessitates one of the partners leaving his or her natal *bilek*.[10]

31. The Iban have a special term to describe the act of marrying out. It is the verb *ngugi* (root form: *ugi*), which Howell and Bailey translate as: 'to go and live in the husband's (or wife's) bilek.'[11] In the Kapit district the phrase *'ngugi ka orang'* is commonly used. These words meaning: 'to go, on marriage, and reside with other people,' (i.e. the *bilek-family* of one's spouse) describe the process even more clearly. The term *ngugi* applies equally to males and females, and in point of fact, women marry out of their natal *bileks* almost as frequently as do men. When a woman leaves her natal or adoptive *bilek* and takes up residence in the *bilek* of her husband, the result is virilocal marriage, while uxorilocal marriage results when a man leaves his natal *bilek* and lives as a member of his wife's family.

32. Among the Iban virilocal marriage and uxorilocal marriage are equally permissible, for in Iban culture there are no beliefs or values which result in either form of marriage being given any sort of special preference. But in all cases of stable marriage a definite choice between the two possibilities must in the end be made, for there is no long term system of alternate residence. Often, a newly married couple will follow first one form of domicile and then the other before finally settling down. Marrying into another *bilek* means the virtual abandonment of one's natal or adoptive *bilek-family*, and it is almost always an occasion of stress and sorrow, particularly for the parents of the seceding son or daughter. Conflicts of interest very frequently arise, but if a marriage is to endure a compromise is always reached, and sooner or later the couple permanently adopt either virilocal or uxorilocal residence.

33. In the 107 *bilek-families* of Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, there were, in all, some 140 affines (i.e. individuals who had become *bilek-family* members by process of marriage), making up 22.7% of the total membership of the three communities. And of these, 75 (or, 53.6%) were women who had taken up virilocal domicile, while 65 (or, 46.4%) were men living uxorilocally. These figures have an important bearing on our investigation of Iban social structure for they indicate the approximately equal incidence of virilocal and uxorilocal marriage.

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(10) My genealogies (which number several hundreds), do not contain a single instance of marriage having taken place between first cousins who were members of the same *bilek-family*; nor did any of my informants know of any such marriage having taken place. Relations between other members of the *bilek-family* would be incestuous, as indeed between first cousins where an adoption relationship existed between them. As already pointed out (Para. 16), it is rare in Iban society for first cousins to be members of the same *bilek-family*. Of the 107 *bilek-families* of the three long-houses: R. Nyala, R. Sibat, and R. Tungku, only seven contained first cousins. (Cases of adoption are omitted). Moreover, in five of these seven *bilek-families* partition was either imminent or actually in process of being arranged. And in each instance partition would have involved the separation of the first cousins into new and distinct *bilek families*. In only one of the seven *bilek-families* were there first cousins who had passed the age of puberty; and in this solitary case they were the only daughters of two sisters both of whom were divorcees. In other words there was not a single instance of first cousins who had reached puberty and were of opposite sexes, living as members of the same *bilek-family*.

(11) Howell and Bailey, 1900, p. 182.

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34. Further analysis reveals that the 140 affines mentioned above fall into three distinct categories:

(*a*) married persons (i.e. men and women living in state of wedlock in their spouses' *bilek-families*); 109 individuals, or 78% of total;

(*b*) widows and widowers (i.e. men and women who, despite the death of their spouses are still living as members of their deceased spouses' *bilek-families*); 28 individuals, or 20% of the total;

(*c*) divorcees (i.e. men and women still living as members of their former spouses' *bilek-families*, despite the fact that their former spouses—now divorced—have taken up residence elsewhere); 3 individuals, or 2% of the total.

Table 8, shows the way in which the affines of these three categories were domiciled.

TABLE 8. DOMICILE OF AFFINES

Category	*Men practising uxorilocal domicile*	*Women practising virilocal domicile*
Married persons (i.e. actually living with spouse)	61	48
Widows and widowers	2	26
Divorcees	2	1
Totals ...	65	75

589
582
166

35. A noticeable feature of this Table is the marked preponderance of widows over widowers. But it must not be thought that this phenomenon has some special connection with affines. A similar sort of preponderance occurs in the case of widows (27 instances) and widowers (5 instances) who are living as members of their natal *bilek-families*. This state of affairs results very largely from the fact that Iban men tend to marry women a good deal younger than themselves. It is one of most cherished customs of the Iban that men—and particularly young men—should periodically leave their long-houses and venture out into the world to seek their fortunes. These journeys, or *bejalai*, frequently last for several years on end, and often extend to the remotest corner of Borneo, and even to Malaya and the Islands of Indonesia. They have two main aims: the acquisition of valuable property and of social prestige. For most young men these journeys are an overruling passion, and, as a result, they do not settle down to domestic life until a good deal later than would otherwise be the case. And when they do settle down they tend to marry women a number of years younger than themselves. An analysis of some 34 marriages at Rumah Nyala (where I was able, from long acquaintance, to make a careful estimate of ages), shows that on an average husbands were from six to seven years older than their wives. There was only one instance of a husband being younger than his wife, and the ages of about a quarter of the husbands exceeded those of their wives by more than 10 years. This situation helps to explain the preponderance of widows over widowers, though it is probable that other factors are also at work.(12)

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36. Let us now turn to the 109 married individuals who were living as members of their spouses' *bilek-families*. The domicile of these persons is shewn in Table 9.

TABLE 9.

Long-house	*Males practising uxorilocal domicile*	*Females practising virilocal domicile*
Rumah Nyala	15	19
Rumah Sibat	16	12
Rumah Tungku	30	17
Totals	61	48

Once again, it will be observed that the two types of marriage occur with roughly equal incidence: uxorilocal domicile comprising just under 56% of the total, and virilocal domicile just over 44%. In a more numerous series of 284 marriages—both past and present—taken from genealogies collected at Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, there were 145 instances of uxorilocal residence (or, 51% approx.), as against 139 instances (or, 49% approx.) of virilocal residence

37. These evenly balanced percentages are a clear demonstration of the ambilateral principles on which Iban social life is founded. Acsording to Iban custom both forms of marriage are fully permissible, and in practice they have a very nearly equal concurrence. To put it in another way, men marry out of their natal *bileks* almost as frequently as do women. We may, then, describe Iban marriage as being *ambilocal*, meaning, by this term to denote, a system of marriage in which *either* uxorilocal *or* virilocal residence may be followed, and in which the rules of kinship and inheritance result in neither form of domicile receiving any sort of special preference.

(12) It is well possible that expectation of life is higher for the home-dwelling women than for the much travelled men, though I was not able to collect any conclusive evidence on this point.

38. Let us now consider the changes in status—if any—which result from marrying out of one's *natal bilek-family*. The *bilek-family*, as already described, is an autonomous, corporate group, and furthermore, no man, woman or child can be a member of more than one *bilek-family* at any given time. Thus when an individual marries into another *bilek-family* this act means the relinquishment, for the time being, of all rights in his (or her) natal *bilek* and the assumption of similar rights in his (or her) affinal *bilek*. In other words, out-marriage (involving uxorilocal residence in the case of men, and virilocal, in the case of women) confers on an individual full jural membership of his (or her) spouse's *bilek-family*. Should divorce occur the out marrying individual has no recourse but to[13] *return and resume membership of his (or her) natal bilek*. But when a stable marriage ensues an affine comes to occupy a position of equal importance to his (or her) spouse, and to possess equivalent rights within the *bilek-family*. Indeed, it often happens (and especially in the case of men whose prowess has brought them social prestige), that an affine comes to play the dominant role in the managing of a *bilek-family's* affairs.

39. In the 107 *bilek-families* of the three communities we are discussing, there were 140 affines comprising 22.7% of the total population, or 35.8% of the adult population; i.e. individuals over 15 years of age. These percentages do not, however, convey a just impression of the prominent position which affines occupy in the economic and social life of most *bilek-families*. The subsistence economy of the Iban, and particularly the cultivation of hill *padi*, is characterized by a pronounced division of labour between the sexes, and if a *bilek* is to sustain itself it requires both male and female adult members. But the *bilek-family* is a small group based essentially on the elementary family (i.e. a husband and wife and their children), and so, for the great majority of *bileks*, the services of affinal members are a most needful, if not indispensable, element in their economic organization. Again, it is obvious that a *bilek-family* can only perpetuate itself from generation to generation through the institution of marriage and the procreation (or adoption) of children. It is rare therefore for a *bilek-family* to be even temporarily without at least one affinal member, and during the period of my research, only six of the total of 107 *bilek-families* were, at different times, in this unusual position. They were the *bileks* of widows or divorcees whose own children, for various reasons, had not yet taken husbands or wives of their own, and all of them experienced consequent difficulties in their *padi* farming. All of the other 101 *bileks* contained affinal members, and Table 10 shows the incidence of affines in all of these family groups.

TABLE 10. NUMBER OF AFFINES IN BILEK-FAMILY.

Number of affines in bilek-family	INCIDENCE.				
	R. Nyala	*R. Sibat*	*R. Tungku*	*Totals*	*Percentage*
None	—	1	5	6	5.6%
One	14	25	29	68	63.5%
Two	7	6	12	25	23.3%
Three	4	—	4	8	7.4%
Totals	25	32	50	107	

40. Another way of demonstrating the importance of affines in Iban family structure is to focus attention on those individuals who play a decisive role in the *bilek-family's* economic life. Individuals, that is, who devote the major part of their energies to the cultivation of padi and the managing of the *bilek-family's* farms. Table 11 includes only such individuals, and it will be seen that affines make up about 44% of the total.

TABLE 11. COMPOSITION OF BILEK-FAMILY LABOUR FORCE.

Long-house	PRINCIPLE OF RECRUITMENT.	
	Natal or Adoptive Members	*Affinal Members*
Rumah Nyala	36	33
Rumah Sibat	37	30
Rumah Tungku	77	53
Totals	150	116
Percentages	56%	44%

(13) In the three long-houses, 22 persons came into this category.

542 This Table illustrates the overall importance of affines in economic organization, but in many instances they are even more important than these general figures indicate. Thus in about 30% of the 107 *bilek-families* of our three long-houses, the only adult male capable of undertaking the heavy work of farming (i.e. felling the forest, dibbling, and carrying in and threshing the grain) was an affine; while in another 25%, the only adult female capable of performing the essential tasks of sowing, weeding and reaping was similarly an affine. In other words, more than half of the 107 *bilek-families* would have encountered grave difficulty in subsisting had they been deprived of their affinal members.

Incorporation.

542 587 41. We now come to the fourth principle of recruitment, that of *incorporation*, which arises directly from the institution of marriage. It very occasionally happens that when a divorced woman contracts a second marriage and takes up virilocal domicile, she brings to live with her a child by a former husband. This child thus becomes incorporated into the *bilek-family* of which its mother is a member by right of marriage alone. However if the marriage becomes a stable and enduring one, the incorporated child acquires full jural membership, and has the same rights of inheritance as do any other children subsequently born into the family. Incorporation is a rare phenomenon. It occurred in only three of the 107 *bilek-families* of Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, there being one case in each of the three long-houses. Only four individuals were involved, and they were all girls.

The Principles of Inheritance.

542 428 42. Having briefly described the composition of the *bilek-family*, and the way in which its members are recruited, we may now examine the principles governing inheritance. Let us begin by considering the position of natal and adopted members of the family. As has been already stressed, children become members, by right of birth, of either their father's or their mother's *bilik*—but it must be one or the other. Thus the children of a man practising uxorilocal residence are the members of their mother's natal *bilek*, and of this local group alone. They have no rights of inheritance within their father's natal *bilek*, of which they are not resident members. Similarly, the children of a woman practising virilocal residence are the members of their father's local group, and have no rights of inheritance in their mother's natal *bilek*. Adopted children are members of the *bilek* into which they have been adopted, and of this *bilek* only.

43. The general rule for both natural and adopted children is this: as long as they remain resident members of their own *bilek-families*, sons and daughters possess full and equal rights of inheritance. In other words, within the *bilek*, siblings are parceners,or coheirs. There is thus no recognition of primogeniture, and no differentiation between the sexes, or between natural and adopted children. The equivalence of siblings is well expressed in the phrase: '*menyadi tampong pala*' which the Iban use to describe them. This phrase has the literal meaning: 'siblings whose heads are joined,' i.e. they are conceived of as a unified group. Another much used phrase is: '*menyadi begulai pemai*,' meaning, 'siblings of common inheritance.'

44. However, should a man, upon marriage, leave his natal *bilek*, he thereby relinquishes permanent rights of inheritance in this unit, but acquires similar rights in the *bilek-family* into which he marries and settles down. The same applies to a woman who marries out of her natal *bilek*. An affine then, acquires parcenary rights within the *bilek* of which he or she is a resident member.

45. Thus all the members of a *bilek-family*—natal, adopted and affinal—are homologous units within an autonomous, corporate group. As the Iban themselves put it: 'Whoever stands by the *bilek* (i.e. remains a member) he (or she) possesses the belongings, possesses the valuables' ('*Supa tan ka bilek, iya empu utai, empu-kevesa*'). This was an actual statement made during the course of a gathering held at Rumah Nyala in June, 1950. The purpose of this formal meeting (*baum*) was to discuss the conditions which were to govern the adoption of an infant boy, and the statement was made by one of the men of the adopting *bilek-family*. It is an affirmation that as long as the adopted child elected to remain resident in their *bilek*, he would possess identical rights of inheritance with the other members of the family. This fundamental principle of inheritance was reiterated many times during the course of the discussion (as it always is on such occasions), and all those present were called upon to witness that the members of the adopting *bilek-family* were publicly expressing their concurrence. To clinch the matter another of the men put it even more trenchantly by saying: 'Whoever stands by the *bilek* even though he (or she) be a Kayan, a Bukitan, a Punan, or an Ukit, he (or she) is the one who inherits the property' ('*Sapa tan ka bilek, Kayan, Pakatan, Punan, Ukit—enda ibor, iya empu kevesa*'). Now the Kayans, the Bukitans, the Punans and the Ukits are other tribes of the Rejang headwaters; all are alien, and the Kayans and Ukits, in particular, are the bitter traditional enemies of the Iban. When this is realized, the strength of the utterance just quoted will be appreciated, for it claims that even an enemy, should he come to live in an Iban *bilek*, would, if he maintained his residence, possess equal rights of inheritance with the other members of the family.

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542 421 46. As these statements suggest, the *bilek* is looked upon as a distinct entity comprising one apartment of a long-house, all the valued property which is stored within it, and all the various land and other rights attached to it. The *bilek* property usually includes: Chinese jars (some of considerable antiquity), bronze gongs—large and small, weapons and tools, smoked heads, woven fabrics, ancient beads, ceremonial head-dresses and attire, brass cannons and boxes, and the like. Then again, there are the more perishable objects needed in everyday life: dug-out canoes, mats of many kinds, cooking utensils, and all the varied equipment required in the cultivation and handling of *padi*. And, perhaps most important of all in Iban eyes, there are the magical charms and plants, the several strains of sacred and ritual *padi*, and the land rights vested in the *bilek*. All these things make up the *bilek* which persists through time, and which, from generation to generation, is owned and managed by the *bilek-family*.

47. As long as an individual remains a resident member, he (or she) is one of the group in which ownership and inheritance is vested. Indeed, it is the *bilek-family* as a whole that is the basic unit in the inheritance of the conglomeration of property and rights which constitute '*the bilek*'. Here the Iban family differs fundamentally from the English family, for the senior member of the *bilek-family* does not possess the right to disinherit in any way the junior members. It is the family and not the individual which is the unit in *bilek* inheritance. An elder looks to his children, and to his grandchildren, within the *bilek-family*, to care for him in his old age, and to perform faithfully the elaborate mortuary rites which must accompany his passing from this world to the next. To the Iban these mortuary rites are a matter of supreme importance, and all the senior surviving members of the *bilek-family* are expected to join in their faithful performance. As the Iban themselves phrase it: "if the mortuary rites are equally performed, equally is the property (i.e. of the *bilek*) inherited" ("*Enti blah ngelumbong, blah empu utai*").

48. By the death of an elder a family is depleted of one of its members, but there is no drastic change involved for those who are left behind; the *bilek* is theirs, as it was before, and as before, they continue to occupy it and to manage its affairs. Because of this system of continuing ownership in which the *bilek* and all its appurtenances pass without disjunction from one generation to the next, it is always possible—as far as the memories of the Iban will permit—to trace the line of individuals who have been the previous owner-members of a *bilek-family*. The Iban themselves have a special term to signify the person who is the senior member of a *bilek-family*, by right of descent. Such a person is called the *pun bilek*—literally, the root, or foundation of the *bilek*. Thus, although the *bilek-family* is a corporate group, it is still recognized that there is a person from whom the ownership and inheritance rights of all the other members of the family ultimately stem, irrespective of whether these members be natal, adoptive or affinal.

49. It is of course possible for a pair of siblings to occupy the position of *pun bilek*, but this is a rare event, and in the three long-houses of our sample, only four *bileks* (or 3.7%) fell into this category. (In three instances only one of the siblings was married, while the other was single; and the fourth case was that of two sisters both of whom were divorcees). In most instances all but one of a group of siblings marry out, so leaving only one of their number to become *pun bilek*. Moreover when it does happen that two adult siblings elect to remain in their natal *bilek*, partition almost invariably follows; that is, the *bilek* splits into two independent section with one sibling in each. When the two siblings are both married, partition seems to follow inevitably; thus, in all three long-houses, there was not a single case of two or more married siblings being *pun-bilek* in the same *bilek-family*, nor did I encounter such an arrangement anywhere else in Sarawak. From these facts it will be clear that in collecting Iban genealogies it becomes a matter of critical importance to discover at each generation level which members of the sibling group married out, and which of them remained within the natal *bilek*, for only in this way is it possible to identify those individuals who lived and died as members of a particular *bilek-family*. This vital information also leads to the tracing of *bilek-family* partition wherever it has occurred. This important phenomenon will be discussed in due course.

50. The *pun bilek* may be looked upon then as the nucleus of the *bilek-family*. As the senior member by virtue of descent, he (or she) is a direct link with the past, the person through whom the property and other rights acquired by former members have been handed on to the present members of the family. From genealogical investigation and study it is usually possible to establish the identity of former holders of the position of *pun bilek*, though often for not more than two or three generations. The Iban of the Baleh make no attempt to preserve lengthy genealogies and the longest line of succession which I collected was one containing five generations, including the *pun bilek* who was still living. On occasions indeed, I encountered individuals who were unable to name all of their own grandparents. The Iban are much more interested in the spread or scatter of relationships, where, in the absence of exact genealogical knowledge, they are guided by their classificatory system of kinship. Let us first consider the contemporary *pun bilek* of the 107 *bilek-families* of Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, all of whom could be identified with a high degree of certainty. It has been necessary however to omit, at this stage, five *bileks* of a special type known as *bilek berakop*. A *bilek berakop* is formed when two independent *bilek-families* amalgamate to form a single unit, and in these cases there are always two distinct *pun bilek*—one from each of the constituent groups. This process of family amalgamation will be discussed in detail presently. The contemporary *pun bilek*, or senior members by right of descent, of the 102 remaining *bilek-families* are shewn in Table 12.[14]

TABLE 12. CONTEMPORARY PUN BILEK.

Long-house	*Males as pun bilek*	*Females as pun bilek*	*Pair of siblings as pun bilek*
Rumah Nyala ..	11	12	1
Rumah Sibat ..	14	13	2
Rumah Tungku ..	20	28	1
Totals	45	53	4

(14) In all cases of affinal widows or widowers and their children succeeding, the *bilek* has been reckoned as 'belonging' to the dead spouse— the last determinable *pun bilek*.

Once again it will be noted that there is a fairly even balance between the sexes: females holding the position of *pun bilek* in 54% of cases, and males in 46%.

51. If from genealogical investigation the former *pun bilek* of a family are identifiable, it is then possible to reconstruct a kind of line of succession. Such a line of succession includes all the known previous holders of the position of *pun bilek*, and it is thus a line of all the descendants through whom the ownership rights of one particular *bilek* has been transmitted from one generation to the next. Reconstructing these lines of succession to the position of *pun bilek* is a laborious and painstaking task, but it is an imperative one for the understanding of Iban social structure. An examination of several hundred of these lines shows that men tend to occupy the position of *pun bilek* just about as frequently as do women. Thus, although most of the lines which I collected were only three or four generations in length, the great majority of them (i.e. about 80%) included both males and females. In some instances there was even simple alternation: e.g. male, female, male, female. A few lines did contain four successive *pun bilek* of the same sex, but these were a distinct rarity. Among the 107 bilek-families of our sample, I discovered only three instances of there having four female *pun bilek* in succesion, and only two instances of there having been four males. There is always a slight chance of this sort of succession occurring, but the laws of probability are against it. It can be predicted with complete assurance that were it possible to collect longer lines of succession, every one of them would be found to contain *pun bilek* of both sexes. Table 13. summarizes the results of a careful analysis of all the different lines of succession which I was able to collect at Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku.

TABLE 13. PUN BILEK

Long-house	*Male pun bilek*	*Female pun bilek*
Rumah Nyala	25	43
Rumah Sibat	24	34
Rumah Tungku	55	59
TOTALS ...	104	136

The percentages in this instance (i.e. females, 56.6%; and males, 43.4%) are not quite so evenly balanced as in previous Tables, but they do constitute clear and incontrovertible evidence of the ambilaterality of Iban social structure. In theory, either males or females may occupy the position of *pun bilek*, and, in practice, the position is occupied by individuals of each sex to an approximately equal extent.

52. That the proportions do not, in practice, work out as equally as one would predict from theoretical premises is significant, for it indicates that males marry out of their natal *bileks*, slightly more often than do females. This tendency—running counter to complete ambilaterality—is probably to be accounted for by the fact that whereas Iban men regularly travel far away from their homes and so visit many other long-houses, where marriages are likely to be contracted, the womenfolk undertake such journeys very rarely indeed. In most long-house communities in the Baleh area stories may be heard of young men who have gone off on journeys (*bejalai*) to remote parts of Sarawak, and have never returned. The presumption is that the majority of them have married and settled down in their wives' long-houses.

53. The position of natal members in regard to inheritance is clear, for their rights depend on direct descent. But what of an affine whose membership dates only from the time of his (or her) marriage? By way of explanation let us consider the case of a man who marrys out of his natal *bilek*. When such a man decides upon uxorilocal residence, and when, in the course of time it becomes evident to all concerned that his marriage will be a lasting one, he receives from his natal *bilek-family* a kind of minor inheritance called *pemai*. The amount of *pemai* given to an out-marrying member varies considerably from case to case, for it depends very largely on the degree to which the other senior members of the *bilek-family* approve of the marriage which has been contracted. Cases do occur in which no *pemai* at all is given, while at the other extreme, planned marriages between members of affluential families are often marked by a show of ostentation. Very commonly the *pemai* consists of a Chinese jar (*tajau*), or brass gong—either large (a *tawak*) or small (a *bebendai*); and of various smaller articles such as brass boxes, plates and bowls. The giving of this pemai is an event of great importance, for it constitutes the final fulfilling of a man's rights of inheritance as far as his natal *bilek* is concerned, and it further represents the formal termination of membership of his natal (or adoptive) *bilek-family*. Henceforward he is a full member, in all respects, of his wife's *bilek*. All his energies are now devoted to the welfare of this new family, and any valuables which he may acquire (as, for example, during a *bejalai*) are the property of this group. In other words, when a man marries out of his own *bilek-family* and into another he has conferred upon him full jural membership of a new corporate group, with all its attendant privileges and obligations.

54. The position is perhaps best illustrated by considering Iban death customs. The Iban have an absolute and fervent belief in the immortality of the soul, and in the existence of an After-World, which they call *Sabayan*. To this shadowy land go the souls of all the Iban dead—men, women and children. It is also an unshakeable Iban belief that all objects—animal, vege-

table and mineral—possess a separable counterpart, called *semengat*, and from this it follows that it is possible for any article at all to be taken to the After-World in the form of its soul-stuff. *Sabayan* indeed, is looked upon as being an almost exact replica of this world, and it therefore becomes the solemn duty of the living to equip the dead for their future existence. This is done by providing every dead person with burial property, or *baiya*. This burial property includes an exceedingly wide range of articles, from clothing, *padi* seed, cooking utensils, tools, ornaments and weapons, to precious jars, gongs and fabrics. These objects are either buried with the corpse (an ancient Iban burial ground would be an Eldorado for the archaeologist), or left lying on the surface of the grave; and it is believed that all these objects—in their shape as soul-stuff—are taken to the *After-World* by the soul of the dead man. He is helped in this task by a band of already departed kinsfolk (*antu Sabayan*), who come to offer their assistance and to guide the soul on its ghostly journey to *Sabayan*. The provision of adequate burial property is, to the Iban, a major responsibility. It is, in fact, a final inheritance: the equipping of a person with all the necessaries of social and economic life in the After-World. Furthermore, if a man has attained renown in this world, his *baiya* must reflect this fact. Thus, a man of prestige—a successful head-hunter for example—is clad for his burial in a beautifully woven jacket, and his corpse is ornamented with costly bangles and beads; at his side is laid his curved, long-bladed sword in its sheathe richly embellished with Malay or Chinese silver-work, and in and about his grave are strewn numerous other valuables. A man of fame and substance makes his exit from this world and his entry into the next surrounded by all the material trappings of his earthly status.

55. The providing of a man's burial property and the performing of the accompanying funerary rites is a costly business, but it is a duty which is always faithfully carried out. Should a child die, it is the duty of the remaining members of the natal (or adoptive) *bilek-family* to provide the burial property. What happens in the case of an adult? The answer to this question is clearly of importance in our analysis, for it will give an indication of the status of affinal members of the *bilek-family*. The rule is a simple one: a man's burial property is provided by the *bilek-family* of which he was a member at the time of his death, irrespective of whether it was his natal *bilek*, or a *bilek* of which he had become a member through marriage. This rule applies even though the marriage was a very recent one, and it refers equally to men and to women. In this all-important matter, marriage is as much an arbiter of status and eligibility as are birth and adoption. It is also incumbent on the *bilek-family* in which a man dies—whether natal or affinal—to perform many other rites. They are the group that must commission a spirit-medium (*manang*) to carry out the remarkable *beserara* rite in which the soul-substitute (*ayu*) of the dead man is ritually cut away from the *ayu* of the surviving members of the family; they are the group that observes the prolonged and rigorous period of mourning (*ulit*) and that, after about a year has elapsed, must organize the involved and costly rites known as a *gawai lumbong*, at which the ghosts of the dead are welcomed back as honoured guests and presented with further lavish gifts of food and property before a final parting is made.

56. A man's *baiya*, or burial property is his inheritance from this world for his transmigration to the next, and it is provided by the *bilek-family* in which he was living at the time of his death, regardless of whether he was a natal, an adopted or an affinal member. Reciprocally, all the property which he has acquired—and some men of enterprise do build up considerable fortunes in Iban eyes—is inherited by this *bilek-family*, and this *bilek-family* alone. For a man there are two possibilities: (*a*) he may die a member of his natal *bilek*, or (*b*) he may die in a bilek of which he has become a member through marriage. Let us consider each of these situation in turn:

(*a*) If a man dies as a member of his natal (or adoptive) *bilek-family*, all the property he has acquired is inherited equally by all the surviving members of this group. That is, by his parents (should they still be alive), by his wife and children, and by any of his siblings, their spouses and children who are still resident members.

(*b*) If, on the other hand, a man dies as a member of the *bilek-family* into which he has married, all the property he has assembled remains in this group being inherited equally by his parents-in-law (should they still be alive), by his wife and children, and by any of his wife's siblings and their spouses and children who are also resident members.

For a woman the position is precisely the same.

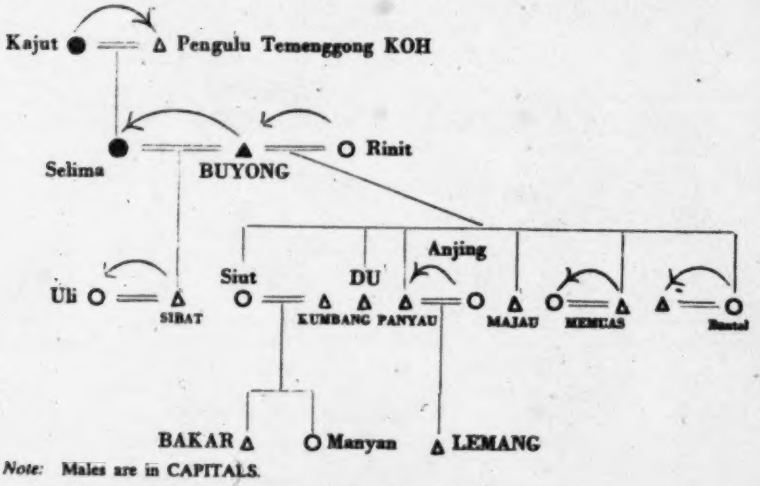
57. The principles of group membership and inheritance may be further illustrated by an analysis of the status of widows and widowers in Iban society, and particularly, of those who are affines. By way of example, let us consider the case of a woman practising virilocal marriage whose husband happens to die. What is the position of this woman? Does she remain as one of the *bilek-family* of her deceased husband, of which she is a member by right of marriage alone; or, does she, in due course, return to her natal *bilek-family*? In a society based on principles of unilateral descent (say a patrilineal society) a woman, even though she marries virilocally, still retains membership and other rights within the lineage into which she was born. In some patrilineal societies the levirate is practised, but in others, a widow returns to resume residence as a member of her birth group. In Iban society, which is organized on other principles, the case is entirely different, and neither of these things happens. Among the Iban a widow has every right to stay on as a member of her deceased husband's *bilek*, and, indeed, it is her acknowledged obligation to do so. In the event of death occurring in the very early stages of a marriage, a woman may perhaps elect—after the proper rites have been observed—to return to her natal *bilek*, but in all cases where the marriage has been welll established, and especially if there are children, there is a very strong tendency for wives to remain. The same applies to a widower

592 589 who has been practising uxorilocal marriage. In the three long-houses Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, there were 59, out of a total of 107, *bilek-families* containing either a widow or a widower. Detailed analysis shows that there were 31 cases of widows and widowers living as members of their natal *bileks*, and that almost the same number —28—were living either as widows or widowers in *bileks* of which they were members by right of marriage and local residence. Moreover in all 107 *bileks* there was not a single instance of a widower (practising uxorilocal marriage), or a widow (practising virilocal marriage) who had returned to his or her natal *bilek*. These facts and figures demonstrate conclusively that when a man marries out of his natal *bilek-family* and into that of his wife he acquires full jural membership of this affinal *bilek*. The same thing happens when a woman marries out of the *bilek* into which she was born, and takes up virilocal domicile. In Iban society marriage involves a radical change in group membership for all out-marrying individuals, for within the *bilek-family* marriage confers the same jural status as do birth and adoption.

589 765 715 58. It is interesting to note that among the Iban, the death of one of the partners does not automatically dissolve a marriage contract, for, according to Iban notions, although death does mean a radical change of abode, there is no abrupt severence of binding ties and relationships. When a man dies he goes to *Sabayan*, the ghostly After-World, which is thought of as being continuous with this earthly realm. Spirit-mediums (*manang*) claim to reach *Sabayan* in their trances, and it is frequently visited by the wandering souls of dreamers. As a much used saying puts it: "No thicker than the skin of the brinjil fruit is the division between we Iban, and those of *Sabayan*". Thus, even though a man is dead, the wife which he has left behind him is still his lawful spouse. During the period of strict mourning, which it is incumbent upon her to observe, a widow may have relations with no other man, for to do so would be to commit adultery, and to be liable to all the usual penalties. The period of mourning lasts for about a year until a *gawai lumbong* is performed—the elaborate rites at which the ghosts of the dead are entertained for the last time. One of the most important parts of this final leave-taking is the ceremony in which a widow is ritually fined, and so formally separated from her dead husband. Thereafter she is free to re-marry should she so desire. A similar rite is also performed for widowers.

587 592 428 59. Remarriage—especially when the death of one's spouse has occurred in middle or in old age—is not common. But when it does happen, it happens almost as frequently among affinal widows and widowers at it does among widows and widowers who are living as members of their natal *bileks*. In the 107 *bileks* of Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, there were only 13 instances of widows and widowers who had remarried. It is significant that of these 13, some 6 were affines. Five were widowers who had married a second time, but nevertheless continued to live in their deceased wives' *bileks*, of which they were members by right of marriage alone. One was a widow who had remarried but gone on living in her deceased husband's bilek. Occasionally a child born of the second marriage of an affinal widow or widower may come, in the course of time, to occupy the position of *pun bilek*. Or, to put it another way, the inheritance of the bilek may pass through an affinal link. To illustrate this unusual process let us take an example from Rumah Sibat of the Sungai Melinau. The essential facts are shown in the following genealogical excerpt:

Figure 1.



Note: Males are in CAPITALS.

Arrows indicate: in-marriage, or out-marriage.

Kajut was the first wife of Pengulu Temenggong Koh, and following their divorce, Kajut became the *pun bilek* of a partitive section of Koh's own natal *bilek*. Kajut's daughter (by Koh), Selima, then married a man named Buyong, who took up uxorilocal residence. Some eight nights after the birth of her first son, the present Pengulu Sibat, Selima died. Buyong stayed on in Kajut's *bilek*, and after he had gone through the required period of mourning and the stipulated rites of separation, he married again, his new wife Rinit adopting virilocal domicile. In course of time, first Kajut and then Buyong died, and Sibat, the sole remaining descendant, married out to live uxorilocally in another *bilek* of the same long-house. Thus it came about that Rinit and her children came to inherit the *bilek* which had formerly belonged to Kajut—though all of them were her affinal relatives (i.e. through her son-in-law, Bujong). Of Rinit's six children two have married out; her son Memuas, to live uxorilocally in the same long-house, and her youngest daughter Bantal, to live virilocally in a distant community—Rumah Kasau of the Sungai Gat. Two other sons, Panyau and Majau (the first of them married to a girl of the same long-house), have broken away from their mother, and set up a *bilek* of their own. It will be noted that, in fact, this is a former part of Kajut's *bilek*, which was, in turn, a former part of the natal *bilek* of Pengulu Temenggong Koh. Those remaining with Rinit in 1950 were, her married daughter Siut, and Du, an unmarried son; together with Siut's husband, Kumbang (from a long-house in the Sungai Merirai), and their children Bakar and Manyan. In 1950, Rinit was a woman of about 60 years; and on her death, Siut and Du (unless he marries out in the meantime) will become the *pun bilek* of a *bilek* of which they are strictly only members by 'affinal' rights. Inheritance of this kind does not occur very often, but it is entirely consistent with the principles of Iban social structure. The case of Kajut's *bilek* does indeed, illustrate very plainly most of the processes which we have so far analysed, as well as *bilek-family* partition, which is the next subject to be discussed.

Partition.

60. As the analysis so far has indicated, the *bilek-family* is an allodial, corporate group, holding property and other rights in absolute ownership. It has also been stressed that within the *bilek-family*, siblings have equivalent rights; in other words, they are parceners, or coheirs. Implicit in this situation is the possibility that an adult sibling may claim his (or her) share of the *bilek* inheritance, and set up a separate domestic unit. This is exactly what does happen; and indeed, it is a common phenomenon in Iban society. The process is, I think, best described as *partition*, for what happens is the division of a *bilek* into two distinct parts, each part becoming an autonomous unit in its own right. The Iban term describing this event is *kadirl*, which means 'to become separate.' The fundamental feature of the process is the fact that each part, after partition has occurred, is a completely independent entity, and not merely a constituent segment of some wider coporate group. The partition of *bilek-families* as it occurs in Iban society is thus a different process from *segmentation* as it occurs in societies based on unilineal principles. In these societies—whether patrilineal or matrilineal—segments are always component parts of a more inclusive lineage or clan,[15] and within the society as a whole, the status of each segment is determined by its relative position within this hierarchical system. In Iban society, on the other hand, although *bilek-families* are always linked by cognatic ties, they are fully autonomous units both socially and jurally. The distinction may be summed up by saying that whereas the segments of a lineage are a system of aliquot parts, the *bilek-families* of an Iban community are a series of discrete units.

61. *Bilek* partition is a widely prevalent phenomenon in Iban society, and instances of it are to be found in virtually all long-house communities. Again, in almost all of the several hundred family genealogies which I collected, there was at least one instance of *bilek* partition. A more exact indication of the prevalence of partition may be obtained from an analysis of the status of the 107 *bilek-families* of the three long-houses, Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku. Here we are interested in locating all those *bilek-families* which have come into being as a result of partition that has taken place during the lifetime of one of their living members. It is difficult to ascertain with any great accuracy the span of time that is here involved, but we are probably dealing with all those cases of partition which have been taken place in the three communities during the last forty to fifty years. During the period since their formation, the composition of each of the three communities has changed a good deal—*bilcks* from neighbouring areas have attached themselves, while others have left to join other long-houses. This, however, has no direct bearing on our present enquiry in which we are concerned only with the 107 contemporary *bileks* of the three communities which constitue our sample. An examination of the recent histories of these 107 *bilek-families* shows that 34 of them have come into being by process of partition, during the lifetime of one of their present members. When allowance has been made for five cases of the amalgamation of *bileks*, this represents an overall increase of about 41% in the number of *bilek-families* of the three communities, over a period of from 40 to 50 years. As this percentage indicates the proliferation of *bilek-families* by process of partition is one of the most significant features of Iban social structure. Table 14 shows the incidence of *bilek* partition in each of the three long-houses.

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(15) As, for example, in the patrilineal society of the Tallensi, of West Africa : "...every minimal lineage is a segment of a more inclusive lineage defined by reference to a common grandfather, and this, in turn, is a segment of a still wider lineage defined by reference to a common great-grandfather; and so on until the limit is reached—the maximal lineage, defined by reference to the remotest agnatic ancestor of the group." (M. Fortes, "The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi," Oxford, 1945, p.31).

TABLE 14. BILEK PARTITION

Long-house	*Number of instances of bilek partition*	*Overall increase in number of bileks*
Rumah Nyala	5	22.7%
Rumah Sibat	13	56.5%
Rumah Tungku	16	44.4%

62. This high incidence of *bilek* partition can be co-related with a rising population. It will be obvious that partition never occurs if a family has only one child, for this individual is then the sole heir. Again, if all families produced two children the tendency would be for one of them to marry out, and the other to be left in possession of the natal *bilek*. But as soon as the majority of families rise above this level partition is sure to occur, for, as will be shown in the analysis that follows, it is extremely rare for a pair of siblings, each of whom is married, to remain permanent members of their natal *bilek*. Sooner or later, one couple breaks away to set up a *bilek* of their own. Thus nowhere amongst the Iban did I encounter an instance of married siblings with adult children, who were still living together in the same *bilek*. Furthermore there are few cases of individuals who either never marry, or finish up as permanent divorcees without children of their own. In the three long-houses, Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, there were only eight men and four women who fell into these categories, or about 5% of the total of 239 individuals, 31 years of age and over. From these facts it will be seen that an increasing population necessarily results in the proliferation of *bilek-families* by process of partition.

Causes of Bilek Partition.

63. What are the causes which give rise to these high rates of *bilek* partition? As has been already explained the *bilek-family* is a corporate group, and all *bilek* property and other rights are held in common by all members of the family. This does not mean that there is no concept of personal property. A man's clothes are his own, as are his various accoutrements and most of the weapons he uses; and in the same way, a woman possesses her own garments and jewellery. But all the really valuable possessions (or, *peseka*) of the *bilek*, made up of brass gongs and cannons, Chinese jars, plates and bowls, woven fabrics, beads and other ceremonial attire, plantations of fruit trees, tracts of *padi* land, *antu pala*, charms and *padi* seed, are held in common family ownership. For any particular *bilek*, most of this property will have been acquired by past generations of the family, but the present members will also have contributed their share. If the *padi* crop is an abundant one, part of the surplus is always used to purchase property for the *bilek*, and the men of the family, when they undertake their expeditions (*bejalai*), whether inland to gather jungle produce, or to the coast to work for wages, are expected to return home with some articles of value to add to the common inheritance. Similarly all the members of a family work together as a team to grow the rice they require; for in this, as in all other economic pursuits, they co-operate to form a single producing and consuming unit. This system of common ownership, production and consumption by the *bilek-family* works satisfactorily enough as long as the *bilek-family* remains restricted in numbers. In the case of small families, such as those consisting of a man, his wife and their children, it is, indeed, an ideal arrangement, for there is a complete concurrence of interests. But when the children of a family grow up and become adults stresses very frequently develop. In most families, one, at least, of the sons or daughters marries out, and so attains membership of some other *bilek*, but, if the family be a large one, it is usual for two or more of the other sons and daughters to remain as members of their natal *bilek*. Should two of these siblings marry while still retaining membership of their natal *bilek*, processes are set in train which almost inevitably end in partition.

64. Within the *bilek-family* siblings are equals, owning the same rights and the same obligations, and as such they are joined by strong bonds of solidarity. But when, in due course, these siblings marry, and children are born, this results in the intrusion of new and rival loyalities. The *bilek-family* is no longer a simple group, for it now contains within its boundaries two different elementary families. Crucial questions at once arise. Can these two families succeed in remaining merged as a corporate unit. Is it possible for a man to recognize as equal the claims of his own family and those of his sibling's family? For the great majority of cases the answer to these questions must be plainly in the negative. Iban parents are primarily concerned with their own children and the well-being of their own immediate family; and when two elementary families emerge within the confines of the same *bilek* there is an extremely strong tendency for their interests to diverge. This divergence is prompted by many different factors. Between families sharing the same menage and the same cramped quarters, disagreements and misunderstandings readily arise. There are, for example, numerous occasions for partiality and favouritism, and these easily lead to heart-burning and resentment. A man returning from a journey to the coast brings back more and much better gifts for his own wife and children than he does for his sister and her children, and so breaks the rule that within a *bilek* there should be equal sharing. Or there arises the more serious complaint that one couple are not participating as they should in the arduous work of padi farming, on which the very subsistence of the *bilek* depends. A wife, on some pretext or other, shirks part of the back-breaking task of weeding, and her husband's sister broods over

it as she toils in the heat of the sun. A younger brother-in-law is always gadding off on journeys and neglecting the sterner and duller work of farming. In a society where personal inclination is given unusually free rein, these sort of things can easily happen, for the Iban are just as prone to laziness and the other foibles of human nature as is anyone else. Unequal participation in work and the unequal sharing of its fruits—these are probably the two main causes of dissatisfaction; but very often there are personal antagonisms of quite other origins. At Rumah Sibat, for example, there occurred the case of a young man who married a woman of the same long-house and brought her to live in his natal *bilek*, the bilek of which his married sister was also still a member. In this there was nothing untoward, but it so happened that the sister's husband, some few years previously, had committed adultery with this very woman, who had now become an affinal member of the same domestic family. The two women were scarcely on speaking terms with one another, and it was not long before the *bilek* had split into separate sections.

65. Very often partition is preceded by disagreements which culminate in quarrelling. The beginnings are usually small, and their accretion gradual, but aggravation follows aggravation until at last the storm breaks. One of the wives of a *bilek* finds her position intolerable, she whispers her complaints to others in the long-house, and before long her barbed words of condemnation percolate back to the person against whom they were directed. In retaliation the process is repeated, until, at last there is quarrelling and an open breach in the family. According to the Iban themselves, resentment (*pedis ati*) at the words and behaviour of some other member of the *bilek* is the factor which most often leads to partition. My own observations fully bore out this conclusion that disagreements and discord are closely associated with the break up of *bilek-families*, but it is important to note that they are almost always the outcome of stresses implicit in the existence of two elementary families in the same household. Furthermore, when quarrelling does occur between the elementary families of a *bilek* it is usual to find that one or both of the two affinal members are involved. This leads us to the heart of the matter. A group of unmarried siblings have a united interest in the welfare of their natal *bilek, and* it is only by marriage, that the opportunity to set up separate *bileks* is created. When siblings who are members of the same *bilek* do marry, their unity is at once threatened by the rival loyalty which they now have towards their spouses, and this incipient cleavage, which is accentuated by the arrival of children and the setting up of families, almost always ends in complete separation. In other words, when they exist within the same *bilek*, the sibling tie and conjugal tie are opposed forces—the one centripetal, or tending to hold the *bilek* together, and the other centrifugal, or tending to split it into separate parts. In the great majority of cases it is the conjugal tie which proves the stronger, and eventually causes the *bilek* to sub-divide. This is borne out by an analysis of the composition of *bilek-families* at the time when partition occurs. In the three long-houses Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, there were 34 *bileks* which had sub-divided, and approximately 80% of these were *bileks* which contained two married siblings and their spouses at the time when partition took place. In each case one of the couples broke away to set up a household of their own. This percentage clearly indicates that divergence or conflict of interest between the families of siblings is a preponderating factor in the process of *bilek* partition.

66. But what of the families with no recent record of partition? Does it ever happen that married siblings do manage to achieve an harmonious and enduring partnership as members of the same *bilek*? My researches, both in the Third and Second Divisions of Sarawak, suggest that it is very rare for such a thing to happen. For more than two married siblings to occupy the same *bilek* is an entirely unheard of event; and, in the three Balleh long-houses which I investigated, there were only eight out of a total of 107 *bileks* in which a pair of married siblings were living as members of the same household. This is a small enough proportion, but not more than two or three of these eight *bileks* could be characterized as a stable group. In two cases partition was actually in the course of being arranged when I left the area in 1951, and, in addition, there were two marginal cases in which there were clear signs that partition was impending. In three of the other *bileks*, one of the marriages was very recent, and it was too early to discern any developments one way or the other. The remaining case was the only really stable and long-standing sibling partnership in the three communities, and it was an unusual one in which two sisters had taken as their husbands two brothers from a neighbouring long-house. In the two Saribas long-houses which I studied—Gansurai (19 doors), of Sungai Layar, and Plandok (13 doors), of Sungai Paku—there was not a single instance of married siblings occupying the same *bilek*. For a pair of married siblings to be members of the same *bilek-family* is then, a rare event, occurring in probably not more than about 5% of all *bileks*. Furthermore, study of the eight examples recorded above and of a series of other recent cases of partition, strongly suggests that even when a pair of married siblings do achieve an amicable partnership, it seldom lasts for more than about ten years. As soon as the couples have established thriving families of their own, the desire for independence is too strong to be resisted, and the families separate, each to seek its individual fortune. The positive advantages of independence are many. Having a *bilek* of their own gives a man and his wife the opportunity to live and work without interference, and in the knowledge that they will not have to share the fruits of their labours with others. To the Iban, who are nothing if not calculating and ambitious individualists, this is an immense attraction. We may say then, that with singularly few exceptions, the emergence of two elementary families within the same *bilek* eventually leads to partition. Indeed, the process is so widely prevalent, and so regular, that it may be cited as a sociological law, and singled out as one of the fundamental features of Iban social structure.

The Process of Partition.

67. Let us now examine the way in which the partition of a *bilek* is achieved. I have described partition as an event which occurs with remarkably regularity in certain social situations, but this is not to suggest that it is, in any sense, an automatic process, like, for example, the fission

592 of cells. The partition of a *bilek* only occurs when a certain section of its members decide for definite reasons to break away and set up a separate household of their own. Acts of choice and decision are always involved, and even though they are always within the narrow range of alternatives permitted by the structure of Iban society. This leads us to the very important point that when a *bilek-family* divides into two groups, one of them is always the instigating group—the group, that is, whose actions precipitate the process of partition, and whose insistence brings it to fulfilment. This instigating group is always the one which breaks away physically to build, and then, to occupy, a new residential apartment of the long-house. Again, almost without exception, its members are younger than the oldest individual of the group which is left in possession of the ancestral *bilek* of the family. In discussing partition it will be convenient therefore, to refer to the instigating and emergent group as the junior section of the family, and to the passive and stationary group, as the senior section. A further point of importance is the fact that the junior or emergent section usually has fewer members than the senior section. An analysis of some 20 recent cases indicates that, on the average, a *bilek-family* contains about eight or nine members at the time when partition occurs, with the senior section having five or six, and the junior section three or four members. It does occasionally happen that the two sections are of equal size, but this does not occur in more than about one case in ten. We may say then, that the predominant pattern of *bilek* partition is for a junior and minor group to break away from a senior and major group.

68. As its limited size suggests, the emergent section is generally a very simple group, consisting, in the majority of cases of a married couple and their children. Table 15 shows the composition of the junior sections in some 20 cases of partition for which it was possible to collect reliable data. In all these 20 cases, partition had taken place during the ten years immediately prior to when my observations were made. Rumah Nyala supplied four examples, and Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungka, eight each. It will be noted that married couples either with or without children make up 85% of the total.

TABLE 15. PARTITION.

Composition of junior section (i.e when partition occurred).	*Number of instances.*	*Percentages.*
Married couple, without children	3	15%
Two brothers, one married	1	5%
Married couple, with one child	7	35%
Married couple, with two children	6	30%
Married couple, with three children	1	5%
Divorced woman, with three children	1	5%
Two brothers, one married, and their father and uncle ...	1	5%

69. As this Table clearly demonstrates partition is predominantly concerned with small and newly founded families that decide to break away, to build a home of their own, and to manage their own affairs. But what of that part of the original *bilek-family* which is left behind? It has been already stressed that partition only occurs when a *bilek-family* contains two or more siblings, and so, without exception, the senior section always includes a brother or sister of one of the members of the emergent group. When the family is a large one, as many as four or five siblings may be left behind in the senior section: and sometimes it happens that, after a lapse of years, partition takes place a second time. In addition, the senior section usually contains either one or both of the parents of the *bilek-family*. In the 20 cases we are considering, the situation was as follows:

TABLE 16.

Composition of senior section of bilek-family following partition	*Number of instances*
Both parents alive and members	3
Only one parent alive, and a member	15
Both parents dead	2

These figures emphasize the fact that although partition always occurs at the sibling level, there is seldom division into homologous units: into units, that is, each of which is headed by a sibling. In the great majority of cases (i.e. about 90%), *bileks*, when they divide, into groups which are unequal both in numbers and in generation seniority.

The Partition of Bilek property.

70. What then are the principles which govern the partition of the property and other rights which constitute a *bilek*? Of cardinal importance is the principle that siblings are parceners, or coheirs. This rule applies to all brothers and sisters who are resident members of the *bilek*. Equally important is the acknowledgement in Iban customary law (*adat*) that the *bilek* is, in general, a partible estate. Should a sibling and spouse, for example, elect to part company with the other members of a family, it is recognized that they have a lawful and undeniable claim to a proportionate share of the conglomeration of property and other rights which make up the inheritable possessions of the *bilek*. But there are certain exceptions of the greatest consequence, for two ritual objects, in particular, are strictly non-partible. Both are associated with the growing of *padi*. 592 421

71. In Iban eyes *padi* is by far the most precious thing which they possess; it is the main source from which wealth flows, and upon its successful cultivation all well-being depends. To the Iban however, the cultivation of *padi* is not so much a problem in agricultural method, as a problem in ritual knowledge and skill. *Padi* is a spirit, and a farmer's success depends pre-eminently on his ability to order his dealings with the *padi* spirits in such a way as to win their approval, and attract to himself the bountiful crops which all men desire. To this end, the Iban have, through the centuries, devised a series of most elaborate rites. All of these rites are focussed upon a strain of sacred rice, known as *padi pun*. Each year a tiny patch of this *padi pun* is sown in the centre of the farm, and here are performed the intricate sequence of magico-religious rituals upon which, it is believed, rests the fertility of all the padi that has been planted. At this stage however, we are concerned with the fact that every *bilek-family* has its own particular variety of *padi pun*. Unlike ordinary kinds of rice, *padi pun* is never sold or given away, for this would be to dissipate its magical efficacy, acquired during the countless rituals carried out by past generations. In addition to its *padi pun*, a *bilek-family* also possesses three or four subsidary strains of sacred *padi*. These are termed *sangking*, and each year they are sown in small plots immediately around the *padi pun* itself. Although all rituals are focussed primarily on the *padi pun*, the several *sangking* also fall within their ambit. It is rather as if the *padi pun* were the eldest of a band of brothers. Every different *padi pun* has a personal name peculiar to itself, and the same applies to all the different kinds of *sangking*. For example, Kubu's *bilek*, of Rumah Nyala, possessed a *padi pun* called Letop, and four *sangking* named Bauk, Segendang, Pinang and Mawang. It is one of the axioms of Iban *adat* that the *padi pun* of a *bilek* is non-partible. What then is the solution when a family subdivides into two separate households? Briefly, it is this: the senior section retains possession of the *padi pun*, while the junior and emergent section is presented with one of the *sangking*, which is then elevated to become its *padi pun*. This is clearly a matter of crucial importance in the study of the process of *bilek-family* formation in Iban society. The senior section of a family is always definable by the fact that its *padi pun* was inherited as *padi pun* from the previous generation; while the *padi pun* of a junior section was inherited as *sangking*. By studying the inheritance of *padi pun* and *sangking* therefore, it is always possible to establish the main line of a family, and the various offshoots from it, which have been brought about by partition. 592 422 241 778

72. A second non-partible object is the *batu pemanggol*—a ritual whetstone, which is the centrepiece of the rites that initiate the yearly farming cycle, and the most important charm which a family owns. A few Iban families still possess whetstones upon which human victims—captives taken in war—were once sacrificed. Such stones are called *batu jaum*, and are immeasureably valuable in Iban estimation. To divide a *batu pemanggol* would be to destroy it, and so, when partition takes place, it is always retained by the senior section of the *bilek*. The junior section, seeking an auspicious occasion, gathers a suitable looking stone from the riverbed. With a great show of solemnity, the new stone is touched on the old, and then consecrated; tutelary spirits are invoked and offerings made, and finally a pig (or cock) is sacrificed upon its surface. When partition occurs then, the senior section of the family always retains the ancestral *padi pun* and *batu pemanggol*. It may also happen that a *bilek* possesses some other unique magical or ritual object, and if this is the case, this too is retained by the senior section. Again, it is the senior section which continues to occupy the family's old apartment, while the junior section sets about constructing a new apartment, joined to one end or other of the longhouse. 592 422 778 782

73. With these few exceptions all the other property of the *bilek* is partible, and its apportionment is in accord with the relative size and composition of the two sections resulting from the partition. Thus, if each section contains one married sibling—the property is divided as equally as possible between them. On the other hand, if the senior section contains two siblings, and the junior section only one, the apportionment is then in the proportion of two to one, and so on The share allotted to affines depends on the period of time for which they have been members, and during which they have contributed to the prosperity of the *bilek*. Cases do occur in which long-standing affines are granted exactly the same share as natal members. Plantations of rubber and fruit trees are also usually divided, though it is sometimes agreed that both sections should continue to have equal access to the crop of fruit trees. Similarly, both sections have the right to farm land acquired by the family (by the felling of virgin jungle) prior to partition having taken place. That is, there is a joint sharing of rights but no actual partition of the land itself. Land cleared by their section subsequent to partition however, is independently owned. This situation will be discussed in detail when we come to the subject of land tenure and usage. 592 421

74. More often than not the apportionment of property is carried out by the members of the two families themselves in private conference. But cases do occasionally happen in which feelings run so high that agreement cannot be reached, and in this event, the *tuai rumah* and 592 578 421

592 598 421 other elders of the long-house are called in to act as assessors and adjudicators. They meet in the apartment of the family concerned, where all the non-personal, inheritable property has been heaped up in the centre of the room. All the members of the family are also present, and the composition of the two sections seeking partition is well known to all taking part. After a brief interchange of views, the value of the various items of the assembled property is formally assessed, and they are then allotted in the proper proportions to the two sections. The property is at once taken into custody by the two groups. In addition to the adjudicating elders, there are always a number of other outside witnesses (i.e. other members of the long-house), and so the partition becomes a final and binding settlement. The occasion concludes by one of the elders waving a cock, in blessing, over the divided sections of the family, and uttering the prayer that henceforward they will live in concord and their affairs prosper.

592 428 75. The share (*ungkop*) of the *bilek* property which a sibling receives when partition occurs must not be confused with the *pemai* inheritance, received by an out-marrying sibling (c.f.: Para. 52). These are entirely distinct entities. To illustrate this let us take the example of Jilap and Landun, a married couple of Rumah Sibat. In about 1948, Jilap, a young man of some 22 years of age, married Landun, a girl of the same long-house, and took up residence in her *bilek*, which was only a few doors away from his own. Soon after Jilap had settled down to married life, he received from his natal *bilek-family* the following articles, constituting his *pemai*:

1 Chinese jar (*tajau rusa*),
1 brass box (*baku*),
2 woven fabrics (*pua kumbo*),
2 ikat skirts (*kain kebat*).

This *pemai* represented the final fulfilling of Jilap's rights of inheritance as a member of his natal *bilek*. Landun's family consisted of her father, Ingan, and her mother, Layeng, and their five sons and daughters, of whom Landun was the eldest. About a year after their marriage had been contracted, disagreement arose over the contribution which Landun and Jilap were making to the farm work of the family, and it was decided that they should set up a *bilek* of their own. By this time Landun had given birth to a son, and there was every prospect that her marriage with Jilap would be a lasting one. An unoccupied room adjoining the *tanju* of the long-house (the property of Jilap's father), was made available to them, and here, in 1950, the young couple set up a menage of their own, and started farming independently. In this case, partition involved the breaking away of a daughter, her husband and child, from her natal family consisting of father, mother, three brothers and a sister. The portion of the *bilek* property allotted to Landun and Jilap was:

1 Chinese jar (*tajau lalang*),
1 brass box (*baku*),
1 large plate,
15 ordinary plates (*pinggai*),
4 bowls (*jaiong*),
30 saucers (i.e. sufficient for preparing a *piring lapan*, the standard ritual offering of the Iban),
2 cooking pots (*priok*),
1 cooking pan (*kali*),
2 bush knives (*duku*),
1 hunting spear (*sangkoh*),
2 fishing spears,
1 large floor mat,
2 *padi* carrying baskets (*lanji*),
2 padi storing baskets (*baka*),
2 winnowing trays (*chapan*),
1 harvesting basket (*sintong*),
1 dibbling stick (tugal),
padi seed, etc., and
ritual plants (*sengkenyang*).

If Landun's siblings had not been so many, she would have undoubtedly received a larger inheritance, but her parents were well aware, that with four remaining children, partition would probably recur in subsequent years. However, the property which Landun did receive was certainly sufficient to equip the young couple in setting up a household of their own, and this is the minimum requirement which partition must always meet.

592 591 76. In the normal course of events, the partition of a *bilek* takes place during the period between the end of the harvest and the felling of the jungle for the next season's farm, sometime, that is, during the months of April, May or June. This enables the *padi* crop to be apportioned between the two sections, and for each of them to make the necessary arrangements for their farms of the ensuing year. It is significant to note that the process of partition is often initiated by two section of a family establishing separate farms a year or two in advance of the formal apportion-

ment of the *bilek* property. In these cases, even though there may have been quarrelling, the two sections have come to accept partition as inevitable. All the long-houses of the Baleh area are strategically situated on the banks of rivers navigable by canoes, but because of their system of shifting cultivation, the Iban are compelled to spend most of their time living in smaller residential units called *dampa*, which are built in the tracts of country actually being farmed. These *dampa* are constructed on exactly the same principles as a long-house, though on a smaller scale, and they usually contain not more than about six *bilek families*. Partition often takes the course of the two sections of a family farming separately, and occupying different apartments in a *dampa*, while continuing to share the same *bilek* in the main long-house. This arrangement may sometimes continue for two or three years. It gives the members of the junior or emergent section time to establish themselves, and to gather the materials needed for building a new *bilek* on to the long-house. Only when this has been achieved is a final apportionment of property made. When partition is planned in this way, the two sections, despite separation, maintain close and intimate ties of co-operation, based on siblingship, and when the long-house comes to be rebuilt they usually arrange to occupy adjacent *bileks*.

77. There is one further aspect of the process of *bilek* partition which deserves mention. It has been shown that the *pun bilek* of a family—the senior member by right of descent—may be either a man or a woman, and that, in fact, males and females occupy the position of *pun bilek* to an approximately equal extent. It has also been remarked that when partition takes place, the emergent section always contains a sibling. This individual, it will be clear, is the *pun bilek* of the new family. Now in Iban society, siblings are equals and coheirs, since there is no differentiation of rights in terms of sex. It is this fundamental principle which results in the system of ambilateral filiation which is the predominant feature of Iban social organization. From this principle one would infer that when partition occurs there is an equal likelihood of a female sibling breaking away from the main family, as there is of a male sibling breaking away. This inference is fully borne out by the facts. In the three long-houses, Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, there were 34 cases of partition all of which had occurred during the lifetime of the members of the *bileks* concerned. An analysis of these 34 cases shows that without exception, both major and minor sections contained at least one sibling. Furthermore there was only one instance of a minor section including more than one sibling, and in this solitary case, they were a pair of brothers, only one of whom was married. An analysis of the sex of the siblings who were the *pun bilek* of the emergent sections in all 34 cases of partition, shows that there was an exact balancing of males and females—17 of them being women, and 17 of them men. These facts are presented in detail in Table 17.

TABLE 17. PUN BILEK OF EMERGENT SECTIONS IN BILEK PARTITION.

Long-house.	*Male Pun bilek.*	*Female pun bilek.*
Rumah Nyala	3	2
Rumah Sibat	7	6
Rumah Tungku ...	7	9
TOTALS	17	17

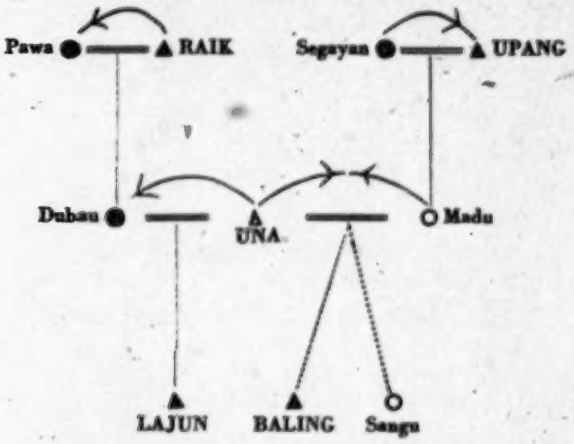
The Amalgamation of Bileks.

78. We have now examined the way in which a *bilek-family* may break up into two autonomous groups—an operation which we have called partition. The fact that *bilek-families* are completely independent units also admits the possibility that circumstances might arise in which it would be in the interests of two of them to join together in some form of permanent partnership. This phenomenon does sometimes happen. It involves the merging of two previously quite separate *bileks* to form a new and unified group. It is always brought about by the joining in marriage of a man and woman, both of whom are *pun bilek* in their own right. This process may be described as the amalgamation of *bilek-families*. Amalgamation is, however, a distinctly rare event, for it is only resorted to when one or both of the two *bileks* concerned are in such a straitened state as to make independent survival either difficult or impossible. The most common cause is the reduction of the personnel of a *bilek* by death. In the three communities Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibat and Rumah Tungku, there were 107 different *bilek-families*; of these, five were *bileks* containing only two members, while 13 were *bileks* with a personnel of only three members. It is obvious that under a subsistence economy any of these 18 *bilek-families* would be drastically weakened by the death of one of its adult members, for it is virtually impossible for a solitary man or woman to undertake, for more than a brief period, the wide range of tasks which the cultivation of hill rice involves. When through the death of a spouse a man or woman is placed in this unfortunate predicament, the most feasible and usual solution is to re-marry.

79. As already explained, the surviving spouse of a family, even when an affine, inherits the *bilek* and all its appurtenances. Let us suppose that this surviving spouse is a man. Usually he will remain in the *bilek* he has inherited and seek a wife who will join him by marrying out of her own natal *bilek*. In due course such an out-marrying woman would receive a *pemai* (minor inheritance) from her natal *bilek*, and become a full member of her husband's family. There is, however another possibility. The solitary widower, whose predicament we are discussing, may marry a woman who is herself the sole heir of a *bilek*. In this case their marriage will result in the merging, or amalgamation of their two separate *bileks*. The group resulting from such an

542 amalgamation of two different inheritances is called, by the Iban, a *bilek berakup*. This graphically describes the process, for *berakup* (root form, *rakup*), is primarily used to refer to joinery work by a carpenter. When amalgamation occurs, one of the two families disposes of, or abandons its long-house apartment, and all the property of both families is placed in the other *bilek*. Similarly, the various land and other rights formerly held by each family separately, become the joint property of the new amalgamated group. In the three communities constituting our sample, there were five *bilek berakup*, or amalgamated families, making up 4.7% of the total number of *bileks*. Rumah Sibat provided three cases, and Rumah Nyala and Rumah Tungku, one each.

80. By way of illustration let us examine in detail the case of amalgamation from Rumah Nyala. The essential facts are summarized in the following pedigree:



Note: Males are in CAPITALS.

Arrows indicate virilocal or uxorilocal marriage.

Dotted lines indicate adoptions.

Una, who, in 1950, was a man of about 65 years, married Dubau in about 1910, and took up residence in her *bilek*, which was then part of a long-house in Sungai Kapit, a tributary of the Rejang River. Soon afterwards Dubau gave birth to a son named Lajun, but in about 1917, Dubau died leaving Una in possession of their *bilek*. Una went through the customary period of mourning, and then married Madu, the sole heir to the bilek of her parents Upang and Segayan. This marriage resulted in the amalgamation of the *bilek* of Madu with that of Dubau, which Una had inherited affinally. In about 1921, Lajun died while still a boy, and a year later, when the Baleh area was opened to re-settlement by the Government of Sarawak, Una and Madu, with all their joint property moved to the Sungai Sut, there to become part of the long-house which gave rise to the present Rumah Nyala. Una built his apartment next to that of his brother Nyoh, who had inherited the *bilek* of which Una was a member before his marriage to Dubau. Una and Madu did not succeed in producing a family of their own, and so they adopted first Baling, the son of Una's brother Nyoh, and then Sangu, the daughter of Madu's brother, Gasing. Baling also died before reaching puberty, and so in 1950, the family contained only three members: Una, about 65 years, Madu, about 60 years, and Sangu, their unmarried, adopted daughter, who was in her early twenties. Sangu was thus the sole heir, by adoption, of the amalgamated *bileks* of Madu and Una—Una having inherited his *bilek* from his first wife, Dubau. Theoretically, it would be quite possible for the amalgamation of *bileks* to be followed, in the next generation, by partition, and cases of this kind do occasionally happen. If, for example, Una and Madu had reared a large family, it might well happen that two of their sons would marry virilocally, and that this, in due course, would lead to the partition of the *bilek* of which they would be coheirs. It is also conceivable that the partition of a *bilek* might be succeeded by the amalgamation of one of its sections with some other *bilek*—though this, certainly, is a less likely occurrence.

81. We are now in a position to assess the relative importance of the two processes of partition and amalgamation in the formation of long-house communities. Partition is by far the more prevalent phenomenon, moreover, it is significant to note that following partition there is a strongly marked tendency for the two resultant sections to remain in the same long-house. Of the 34 instances of *bilek* partition already recorded, there were only three in which one of the sections had moved to another long-house. It is clear that the principal factor in producing this

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state of affairs is the system whereby the two sections of a *bilek*, though otherwise fully independent of one another, continue to have equal access to all the land acquired prior to partition having taken place. Unless therefore a partitive *bilek* can move to another long-house, where there is an ample supply of unowned and virgin land, it will always remain and share the ancestral land. In the past, when there were still extensive and readily available tracts of unoccupied territory, it would have been a simple matter, following partition, for junior *bileks* to move off, and join pioneer, up-river communities. To the shifting-cultivator, access to virgin jungle is a far more desirable right than access to the secondary jungle which has resulted from the farming activities of his forebears. During recent years however, Government policy has severely restrained Iban expansion, and there are now few permitted areas which have not been occupied. In the future unoccupied land will become increasingly scarce, and the opportunities for pioneer settlement even more restricted. The analysis of the 34 cases provided by the three communities of our sample, indicates that the partition of *bileks* results mainly in an increase in the size of long-houses, and is a factor of little importance in the formation of new long-houses. With virgin land becoming increasingly scarce, this tendency will be even more marked in future years. In contrast to partition, amalgamation results in a decrease in the number of *bilek-families*. Although our sample of five cases is too small for any reliable conclusions to be reached, it is interesting to note that in four cases the amalgamation was between *bileks* from different long-houses. Amalgamation is resorted to when either one, or both of the families involved is drastically short of members; but although it is depleted in numbers, a family may still possess much valuable property, and it will always seek an amalgamation which will be to its best advantage. Observations suggest that, for the Rejang region at least, a common happening is for a depleted down-river family, rich in property, to amalgamate by marriage, with an up-river family possessing access to virgin land for farming. An amalgamation of this kind is clearly in the interests of both groups. 592

82. Table 18, shows the incidence of amalgamated *bileks*, and of *bileks* which have resulted from partition, in the three long-houses, Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibet and Rumah Tungku.

TABLE 18. INCIDENCE OF AMALGAMATION AND PARTITION.

Type of bilek	*R. Nyala*	*R. Sibat*	*R. Tungku*	*Totals*
Bileks resulting from partition:				
(a) senior sections	4	12	15	31
(b) junior sections	5	13	16	34
Amalgamated bileks:	1	3	1	5
Bileks which have undergone neither partition or amalgamation, during the lifetime of any one of their present members:	15	4	18	37
Totals:	25	32	50	107

83. We have now completed our brief survey of the *bilek-family*. Before proceeding to a discussion of the long-house community as a whole, let us quickly recapitulate its salient characteristics. The basic unit of Iban society is the *bilek-family*. It is a small group numerically, containing, on the average, about five or six individuals, and of these two or three are usually children. Only about one family in fifty contains more than six individuals over 15 years of age. As these figures suggest, the *bilek-family* is essentially based on the elementary family, which, in about 50% of cases, is extended to include the grand-parent generation. Recruitment to membership is, in the main, by birth, adoption, and marriage. The *bilek family* is also a domestic family—its members constituting a single household, and providing for their own subsistence as an independent group. The *bilek-family* is thus the fundamental unit in Iban economic organization. It is always a local group, occupying only one apartment of a long-house. Most importantly, it is an allodial group, possessing both land and property in its own right, and is *de jure*, the principal corporate group of Iban social structure. Furthermore, the entire estate of the *bilek-family*, with the important exception of its *padi pun* and certain other ritual objects, is partible. This permits the partition of a family and its estate into two autonomous parts, and this process almost invariably results when two married siblings become members of the same *bilek*. Conversely, it is also possible for two distinct *bilek-families* to form a new unit by the amalgamation of their separate estates. We may now turn to a scrutiny of the manner in which a series of *bilek-families* group together to form a long-house community.

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PART II.

THE LONG-HOUSE COMMUNITY.

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84. The whole tenor of the discussion so far has been to concentrate attention on the *bilek-family* as the basic corporate group of Iban society. Let us now consider the wider groupings of Iban society—the long-house communities. From the physical description given earlier in this report, it has been seen that a long-house consists of a series of separate apartments—each owned and occupied by a *bilek-family*—which are joined one to the other so as to produce a single attenuated structure. Three long-houses have been selected for special study: Rumah Nyala—containing 25 apartments, Rumah Sibat—with 32 apartments, and Rumah Tungku—with 50 apartments. All of these three long-houses are however in one respect a-typical, for each far exceeds the average size of communities in the Baleh area. Records made at the time of the 1947 population census show that there were, within the confines of the Baleh, some 133 Iban long-houses, with a total population of 11,348. Unfortunately detailed information for all these 133 long-houses was not available, but if one allows an average of 5.75 persons per *bilek-family*, the average number of bileks per long-house is 14.8. This accords fairly closely with detailed figures for the two largest of the six Baleh districts, data which were available to me at Kapit Fort. These data, which are for the year 1948, and refer to the districts of Penghulu Jenggut and Penghulu Grinang, containing respectively 32 and 29 long-houses, are laid out below.

TABLE 19: SIZE OF LONG-HOUSE COMMUNITIES.

(A) *District of Penghulu Jenggut (32 long-houses).*

Number of bileks in long-house:	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	20	21
Frequency of long-houses containing number of bileks shown:	2	3	3	2	1	4	2	3	1	2	2	2	2	1	2

(B) *District of Penghulu Grinang (29 long-houses).*

Number of bileks in long-house:	6	7	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	19	20	23	24	25	27
Frequency of long-houses containing number of bileks shown:	2	2	1	4	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	3	1	1	1

The average for Penghulu Jenggut's district is 12 *bileks* per long-house, and that for Penghulu Grinang's district 15 per long-house. If the two districts are grouped together, it appears that (a). 25%, of the total of 61 long-houses, contain fewer than 10 *bileks*, (b). only 13%, more than 20 *beleks*, and (c). 62% consist of from 10 to 20 *bileks*. These percentages, and my own observations in various parts of the Baleh, indicate that the majority of long-houses approach closely an average of about 14 *bileks*, but the total range in size is, nonetheless, a very considerable one. As far as I am aware, the largest long-house in the Baleh area was Rumah Tungku, in the Sungai Tiau, consisting of 50 *bileks*, while the smallest were two houses each of four *bileks*, one near the mouth of the Sungai Sut, and the other on the south bank of the Baleh, about two miles above its confluence with the Batang Rejang. It is significant to note that in general even within the Baleh, there is a tendency for up-river houses to be larger than down-river ones. Thus the average for Penghulu Jenggut's district (comprising Sungai Sut and the lower reaches of the Baleh), is some 3 *bileks* per long-house below that of Penghulu Grinang's district (comprising the middle section of the Baleh, and the Sungai Gat). This is to be explained in terms of the land situation, there being a gradual drift of population from down-river, where the land is becoming infertile from too frequent use, to up-river regions where there is still virgin jungle waiting to be farmed. In 1949, for example, I witnessed the departure of six different *bileks* from the Sungai Sut, to join a house in the head-waters of the Merirai; again, Rumah Tungku contained five *bileks* which had arrived from Sungai Sut in recent years. The longest settled and most exploited portion of the Baleh itself, are the hills bordering the last 10 miles of its course. This region was first farmed for a few season about 1880, and then again for the years from 1906 to about 1914, and finally from 1922 onwards. The average size of the long-houses in this worked out region is now only 10 *bileks*—certainly the lowest for the entire Baleh area.

The Sites of Long-houses.

85. All Iban long-houses are situated on the banks of rivers, or streams navigable by dug-out canoes. The Baleh and its tributaries drain broken and hilly country, and their involuted courses contain many rapids. These difficulties of terrain mean that suitable sites for long-houses are often hard to find. What is needed is a terrace, some 20 yards wide, sufficiently elevated to escape the threat of floods (some of the rivers rise 30 to 40 feet above their normal levels following exceptionally heavy rains), and sufficiently level to enable the house to extend lengthwise. In the central portion of most long-houses the floor level is some 10 or 12 feet above the ground. At the ends it may be as much as 30 feet, but should the terrace fall away more sharply than this the architectural difficulties are so severe as to prevent the building on of further apartments. This problem is sometimes solved by 'stepping' the house, so that its floor is on several different levels (as, for example, the house of Penghulu Kuleh, in Sungai Amang), but this arrangement is not favoured, and is resorted to but rarely. Another limitation on the length of a house is the ritual prohibition (*pemali*) against a long-house spanning a tributary stream of the river on to which it abuts. The spanning of such a tributary, even though it be no more than a trickle, is believed to bring misfortune to all the people of the house, and is always avoided. The ritual danger is that the river spirits, offended by the filth and refuse cast beneath the long-house, might seek retribution.

86. The number of apartments which a long-house can contain, is limited then, by these two factors. In some areas suitable sites are so rare that houses have to be built on steep spurs, several hundred feet above the river from which the unfortunate women have to fetch, in gourds, all the water required for domestic purposes. Even Rumah Nyala, in the not intractable lower reaches of the Sut, is now hemmed in by a small stream at one end, and by a sudden falling away of the ground at the other. The usual solution when a community finds itself in this position is for additional *bileks* to be built directly on to the front of the long-house. This results in two parallel rows of apartments each abutting on to a common open platform, or *tanju*. In the case of Rumah Nyala, for example, there were 20 family apartments in the main part of the long-house, giving it a total length of 301 feet. Two other families had built on to the *tanju*, and three others, who were sharing apartments in the main house, planned to do so in 1951. Rumah Tungku, to take another example, is most favourably situated in the wide basin of the Tiau, one of the tributaries of the Sungai Mujong. Here the moderately flat land has enabled 39 apartments to be built in one line, giving the house a length of a little over 300 yards. The house, has however, been constructed in a very slight curve, so that it is not possible to see from one end of the *ruai* right through to the other, lying just over a sixth of a mile away. In addition to these 39 apartments in one line, there were five more built on to the *tanju*, and one protruding from the back of the house. The five remaining families of the total community of 50 *bileks*, were either recent arrivals from other areas, or the junior sections resulting from *bilek* partition; and although all of them had constructed farming huts (*dampa*) of their own, none had, in 1950, built on to the main long-house.

The Dispersion of Long-House Communities.

87. The Baleh is still a sparsely populated region. The Iban are pre-eminently a riverine people, and their occupation of a new territory is always by way of the rivers. Infiltrating into the diverging branches of the Baleh, they have, in the last thirty years, dispersed over a wide area. This process is still continuing; the area enclosed by the points to which they have so far radiated is probably about 1,300 square miles. Far from all of this area is actually in use, and much of it is still virgin jungle, but it does represent the territory over which Iban rights of occupation have been established. For this region, as a whole, the density of population is only about nine per square mile, and nowhere does it rise above 18—20 per square mile. The long-houses in which all the people of the Baleh live are scattered along the banks of the 300 miles of river which they have so far occupied. This means that throughout the region one encounters a long-house about once in every two to three miles. Sometimes long-houses may be found that are within hailing distance of one another, though this is a distinctly rare event. Nowhere are there clusters of houses, such as occur among the Land Dayaks of the First Division, or the Iban of the Rejang Delta.[16] The universal rule is that each long-house constitutes a single community; in other words, among the Iban, the village and the long-house coincide. Moreover, traditionally, each long-house community is an autonomous entity, not subject to the control of any other group.

88. To-day, of course, every long-house is subject to Government control. Thus within the Baleh there are six districts, each in charge of a Penghulu, appointed by, and responsible to, Government. The six districts were, in 1948:

Name of Penghulu	*District*	*Number of Long-Houses in District*
Penghulu Temenggong Koh ...	Ulu Baleh	9
Penghulu Jugah	Ulu Baleh and S. Merirai ..	15
Penghulu Grinang	Ulu Baleh and S. Gat ..	29
Penghulu Sibat	S. Mujong and S. Melinau ..	22
Penghulu Rabong	S. Mujong	26
Penghulu Jenggut	N. Baleh and S. Sut ..	32

(16) At Bawang Assan, for example, some 18 miles down river from Sibu, there are six long-houses all within earshot of one another. All the people of this area cultivate swamp *padi*.

This arrangement is not the outcome of traditional Iban organization, but the result of Government decree when the Baleh was re-opened to Iban settlement in 1922. Except where his powers are sanctioned by Government, the authority of a Penghulu is extremely limited, for Iban society had no institution of hereditary chieftainship, and no system of centralized political authority. A Penghulu is, in fact, little more than a Government magistrate, though he may, because of his personal achievements have acquired prestige and received general recognition as a leader. He has, for example, no right to concern himself in any way with the normal internal management of any long-house other than his own, and even in his own long-house his rights are the same as those held by any other member of the community.

89. Every long-house is situated on part of a specified tract of land. Between long-houses there are always recognized boundaries, though in some of the remote pioneer areas there are sometimes inaccessible pockets of land over which no community makes any particular claim. The majority of existing long-house territories were laid down when the re-settlement of the Baleh took place under Government supervision in 1922.(17) and during the immediately following years; and such expansion as has taken place since then (except during the Japanese occupation) has been with Government sanction. The usual course seems to have been that a long-house community from somewhere below Kapit made verbal application for a tract of country somewhere within the Baleh, and if Government approved, this territory was allotted to them. In general, those who had allied themselves to the Rajah's cause were granted the most favoured tracts of land in the headwaters, where there was plenty of virgin jungle waiting to be felled and farmed; while the rebels and their suspected collaborators were confined to down-river areas (like the Sungai Sut) where considerable inroads had already been made by a previous generation of cultivators. This arrangement had the advantage that it kept potential trouble-makers near to the Fort at Kapit, and so lessened the likelihood of further outbreaks of head-hunting and open defiance of the Government's authority. No attempt seems to have been made to register formally the various long-house territories; instead recourse was had to boundaries consisting of unambiguous natural features. These were either streams, or spurs and ridges constituting a watershed. Each long-house then, is the domicile of a compact and independent community of families, and is situated on the bank of a river that is part of a specified territory over which these various families have either rights of access or ownership.

The Iban Kindred—Defined and Discussed.

90. Having now given some indication of the size, and the territorial distribution of long-houses, we may turn to an examination of the kinds relationship that exist between the *bilek-families* of which every long house community is composed. The Iban system of kinship nomenclature is bilaterally symmetrical, that is to say, in general the same terms are used to denote kin on the father's side as on the mother's side. Similarly, ties of kinship are traced both through father and mother, and relationships of the same order, whether through males or females are of equal value. Furthermore, Iban custom permits the marriage of any two individuals on the same generation level who are not siblings. It is fully permissible for cousins of the first, second, third, or any other degree, to marry, should they so desire; and those of the first degree may be either parallel, or cross-cousins. There is thus no semblance in Iban society of any sort of unilateral, exogamous descent group of the type usually described as a lineage, or clan. Instead, every individual belongs to an extensive bilateral group which may be termed *a kindred*. By *kindred*, I mean to denote, that cognatic catagory which embraces all of an individual's father's kin, and all of his (or her) mother's kin. It will be observed that in this formulation a kindred is defined as spreading upwards and outwards from an individual standing at its centre, or base. Strictly speaking, one should refer only to *personal kindreds*, for it is evident that no two individuals will have precisely the same relatives. However, if the relationships between themselves are excepted, the unmarried and unadopted members of the same sibling group do have exactly the same kindred. We may think then, of a kindred as radiating out bilaterally from the children of a particular elementary family, to include all those persons to whom relationship can be traced through either male or female links. It is, thefore, an uncircumscribed group, extending indefinitely outwards.

91. It will be noted that each outward extension implies an upward extension; relationship to first cousins being through the first ascending generation (i.e. either through the siblings of one's father, or the siblings of one's mother), relationship with second cousins being through the second ascending generation (i.e. either through the siblings of one's maternal, or one's paternal grandparents), and so on. In the theoretical paradigm of a kindred, each successive ascending generation results in an extension of the circle of collateral relatives. Moreover, this extension proceeds by very nearly geometrical progression, for an individual has two parents, four grandparents, eight-grandparents, and sixteen great-great-grandparents, all of whom are likely to have had brothers or sisters, who produced children of their own. Thus, even when a population is no more than barely reproducing itself, the total of an individual's cousins of the first, second, third, and fourth degrees, runs into at least several hundreds. It is obvious that no one could maintain active social relations with all the members of this vast body of kindred. The Iban themselves are fully aware of this aspect of bilateral kinship, and of the way in which a kindred widens as generation follows generation. The idea is a difficult one to conceptualize however. Perhaps the best analogy which I encountered was that made by a young man of the Baleh region, called Unggat. Unggat likened bilateral kinship to the making of a casting-net, or *jala*, which, when finished, is conical in shape and weighted around its circumference by iron

(17) Sarawak Gazette, 1924, p.22.

rings, or small lumps of lead. At the commencement, a casting-net is a very small cone, but as the knotting proceeds, and one circle of mesh loops is succeeded by the next, it increases in size until its final circumference is measured not in inches but in fathoms. In the same way, kinsfolk, whose forebears were once closely related, grow further and further apart (*'nyau ti-nyau'*: 'distant and more distant'), until, in the end, they do not even know that they are kindred.

92. The Iban word for kindred is *kaban*. This term *kaban* may be applied to any man or woman with whom cognatic tie is believed to exist, whether the exact (i.e. genealogical) nature of the tie is known or not. However, the term *kaban* is never applied to relationships within the elementary family. It would be rather like introducing one's brother with the phrase: "This is one of my relatives." Indeed, *kaban* is not generally used to refer to anyone descended from the same grandparents. I remember asking a *tuai rumah* of Sungai Majau, named Igoh, if it was true that he was the *kaban*, of Manang Bungai, the most celebrated spirit-medium of the Baleh region. Mildly irritated at my obtuseness, Igoh rapped out his reply: "*Ukai kaban, agi pulai aki-ini*" ("Of course we are not kindred, we still have grandparents in common"). It turned out that Manang Bungai was the brother of Igoh's father. Other Informants put it in this way: "*Kaban, olih nutut, enda damping, udah entara*" ("Kindred are reckoned through genealogies, they are not near, there has been a gap"). Although there is no definite demarcating point, it is probably fair to say that the category *kaban* begins beyond the range of first cousin. It may be noted, in passing, that while first cousins are sometimes members of the same household, or *bilek-family*, that this never occurs in the case of second cousins. The term *kaban* then, is never used within the *bilek-family*.

93. As already noted, a kindred, by its very nature is an uncircumscribed group, and one cannot define its limits by any kind of precise boundary. Theoretically, bilateral relationships extend indefinitely outwards, but in practice a point is soon reached beyond which relationships are not remembered, and this does, in effect, set a limit to the role of kindred ties in the ordinary social organization of a community. A commonly expressed opinion among the Iban is that *kaban* embraces all connections up to and including fifth cousins, though it is always made clear that there is no hard and fast boundary. This point was elaborated by a group of the senior members of Rumah Sibat, of Sungai Melinau, who at my prompting discussed the matter at great length. They took the example of two young women who were sitting at the edge of the circle. These women—each the mother of a family—were first cousins. If the children of these two women had children, they said, and their children had children, and there was no intermarriage, then the descendants would, in time, cease to be *kaban*, and become *juru*. At what precise point, I asked, did the change from *kaban* to *juru* take place. This provoked a flurry of argument, but the general consensus of opinion was that within the boundary of fifth cousinship (*petunggai lima kali*) individuals are *kaban*, while beyond it they become *juru*. But that was not the end, I was told. When the ties of relationship became even more attenuated (*jauh agi*)—no exact point could be given—one's kindred ceased to be *juru*, and became *suku*. And further, as time went on, these *suku* finally became *orang bukai*, or complete strangers. Relationships, it was said, spread outwards like the ripples made by a stone flung into a pool, until, at last, they merge with, and become indistinguishable from, the surrounding water. This discussion illustrates Iban concepts of the way in which kindred relationships operate. Taking up the analogy of the stone and its pattern of concentric ripples, we can summarize the situation as follows. At the centre of any particular kindred lies a nuclear family, consisting of three consecutive generations—grandparents, children and grandchildren. Beyond, arranged as though in concentric strata, extend all the collateral relatives of this nuclear family. Those contained within the limits of from second to fifth cousinship, are *kaban;* beyond this come those kindred known as *juru*, and further away again those called *suku*,[18] until, at last, the general Iban population is reached, whose members, no longer recognized as kindred, appear merely as strangers (*orang bukai*).

Iban Marriage Rules.

94. This paradigm is however, based on the assumption that members of the same kindred do not inter-marry with one another. In fact, among the Iban, marriage between members of the same kindred is the norm—both preferred and actual. Iban marriage rules are predominantly concerned with sexual alliances within the kindred, for there is no objection to marriage with an unrelated individual (*orang bukai*) if it is known that he (or she) has no hereditary taint of the Evil Eye (*'mau tepang*), and is not descended from a slave (*ulun*). As between members of the same kindred, the rules governing marriage are strictly formulated. Sexual relations within the nuclear family, between brother and sister, between uncle and niece, between aunt and nephew, are all incestuous, and marriage between any of them is unthinkable. This applies whether the relationships between the individuals involved are consanguineous, adoptive, or in-law. Incest, within any of these forbidden degrees, is regarded as a public delict; it results in a collective feeling of moral shock and indignation, and in spontaneous and organized action by the community as a whole. Incest, it is believed, brings dire misfortune to the entire countryside, and all its inhabitants. Any Iban can catalogue the manifold disasters which follow upon incest if a community does not perform the proper rites of expiation. Here are a few of them:

(a) "Our *padi* will not live, and so with all planted things;"
("*Padi kitai enggai idup, enggau utai nanam samoa*").

(b) "Swarms of animals and insects come to devour our padi;"
("*Maioh jelu, indu utai, ka makai padi kitai*").

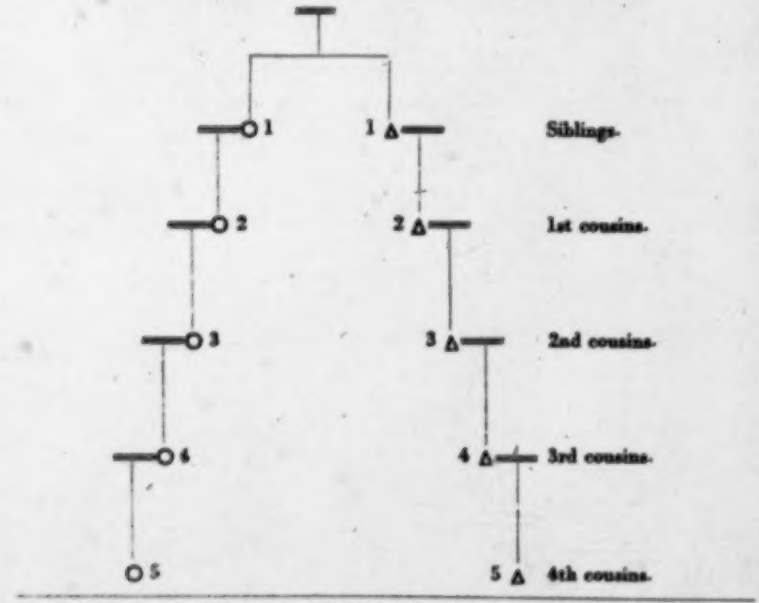
(18) Both of these terms—*juru* and *suku*—are in general use among the Third Division Iban. They occur very frequently in prayers (*sampal*), and invocations (*timang*). In Howell and Bailey's "Sea Dayak Dictionary," *juru* is given the meaning of 'kinsman or kinswoman,' while *suku* is given as meaning 'kindred'.

835 (c) "All things fail, all things are cursed;"
("*Utai tisil magang, utai busong magang*").

(d) "All the gods are enraged with us;"
("*Petara magang ringgat enggau jitai*").

95. Throughout the Third Division, stories are told of the punishment meted out to an
835 incestuous couple, in the old days before the coming of Rajah Brooke. On some prominent head-
684 land a pit was dug, and into it was cast the offending couple, still alive but trussed together, the
783 woman supine and the man prone. Through their bodies a sharpened bamboo (*aur*) stake was driven, and prayers of expiation uttered. Then the pit was filled in, and the bamboo left to grow, as a sign to future generations. On a head-land at the mouth of Sungai Poi, for example, there stands a great clump of bamboos which are never cut. I seldom passed this point, on my journeys up and down the Rejang, without one of my Iban companions turning to remark, that here, not so many years ago, the rite of *pantang*, had been performed over the bodies of an incestuous
[56] couple. Tales are also told of slaves, captured in war, being sacrificed as part of the rites of expiation which always follow serious cases of incest. That this did occur there can be no doubt, for the second Rajah (then Tuan Muda), records that following the great expedition of 1863, an old Kayan woman was sacrificed by the Iban of the Katibas, the direct ancestors of the Iban now occupying the Baleh. Those responsible were severely reprimanded and fined 12 *ruai* jars.[19] The blood of the sacrificial victim was smeared over the ritual whet-stones (*batu pemanggol*) of all the inhabitants of the region, for it was believed that this would offset the dire harm with which incestuous behaviour threatened their *padi*. Whet-stones which have had sacrificial human blood smeared upon them, are termed *batu jawa*, and rank extremely high among the inheritable ritual possessions of the Iban. Nowadays, when incest occurs, both individuals are heavily fined, and the man is often imprisoned. A proportion of the fine is always set aside as *ulasi menoa*, literally, "in expiation of the land." It is divided up among all the surrounding long-house communities, and used by them to buy a pig or fowl, the sacrifice of which is the main act in their separate rites of expiation.

582 96. This brief digression has served to indicate something of the strength of Iban feelings
612 about incest, but it will have been observed that the forbidden degrees are restricted. Beyond
835 the few restricted categories mentioned, all other marriages between kin are permitted. Thus the marriage of first cousins—whether parallel or cross-cousins—is a union fully sanctioned by Iban custom. Similarly second, third, fourth, or cousins of any other degree are free to marry. If certain elaborate and costly expiatory rituals are performed in advance, it is even possible for a man to marry the daughter of his first cousin, but such a union borders so closely on incest, as to be fraught with many dangers, and is never approved. The same applies—though a good deal less stringently—to a man marrying the daughter of his second cousin, or the grand-daughter of his first cousin. However for a man to marry the daughter of his third cousin, or the grand-daughter of his second cousin is perfectly permissible. These rules governing marriage between cousins, etc. are summarized in the following diagram.



(19) Charles Brooke, "Ten Years in Sarawak." 1866, vol. ii, p. 304 seq.

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612
835

(a) Incestuous relationships: 1—1, 1—2, 1—3;

(b) Possible relationship, if certain expiatory rites are performed (*besapat ka ai*) in advance, but always disapproved: 2—3;

(c) Possible relationships, if certain less elaborate expiatory rites are performed (*bekalih*) in advance; not strongly disapproved: 3—4, 2—4;

(d) Fully approved marriages 2—2, 3—3, 4—4, 5—5, 4—5, 3—5.

Marriage Within the Kindred.

97. From this diagram it will be seen that Iban *adat* offers many opportunities for the marriage of close kin. For example, the genealogies, which I collected, contain many instances of individuals having from five to ten first cousins of the opposite sex; and if one considers second cousin links the figure leaps to more than a score. Within a kindred, embracing up to fifth cousins, there are hundreds of individuals, all of whom are potential partners in marriage. Iban custom then, presents all individuals with many opportunities for marriage within their personal kindred. To what extent are they taken? The Iban answer to this question is definite enough: "We Iban, but seldom marry with strangers, to marry with a cousin, or within the kindred, is our practice;" ("*Kami Iban, jarai ka jadi enggau orang bukai, enggau penunggal ka, enggau kaban*"). An analysis of an extensive series of contemporary marriages shows that this opinion is not far from the truth. About 75% of all Iban marriages are between men and women who are members of the same kindred. In Table 20, a detailed analysis is given of 25 marriages, all of which have taken place since the foundation of Rumah Nyala, about 30 years ago. 582 612

TABLE 20. MARRIAGE WITHIN KINDRED.

Relationship of spouses.	*2nd cousins.*	*3rd cousins.*	*kaban.*	*Not kaban.*
Incidence	4	2	13	6
Percentage (approx.)	16%	8%	52%	24%

98. This high incidence of marriage between *kaban*, means that the various kindreds of Iban society are constantly being re-consolidated. This results in clusters of kindred occupying adjacent sections of a river, and it is upon an inter-locking aggregation of kindreds, that the diffuse political structure of the Iban rests. Thus the various groupings which appear in accounts of Sarawak in the nineteenth century, such as the Skrang, the Lemanak, the Ulu Ai Dayaks, etc., were conglomerations of kindreds which formed the basis for a loose tribal organization. These tribes were all predominantly endogamous groupings, and although they possessed no rigid internal organization, the leaders that emerged were always able to claim the allegiance of their kinsmen, for within each tribe there existed strong sentiments of solidarity based on innumerable ties of bilateral kinship. Between many of these endogamous tribes, there were long-standing feuds, and often, a state of intense and permanent hostility—each tribe taking the heads of its enemies when ever the opportunity arose. As late as 1902, for example, a large party of Ulu Ai Iban (i.e. from the Ulu Batang Lupar), attacked two stockaded long-houses in the neighbouring Lemanak River (a tributary of the Batang Lupar), and took 72 heads. It was the great achievement of the second Rajah, Sir Charles Brooke, that by force of arms and divers other means, he contrived to persuade the various Iban tribes to make peace with one another. There is evidence that, since the last of these peace-makings in 1924, tribal endogamy has become slightly less prevalent, and more especially in the newly settled areas of the Third, Fourth and Fifth Divisions. However, the various tribal groupings do still maintain their separate identities to a remarkable degree, and many years will elapse before anything like an Iban 'nation' can emerge.

99. The Baleh area, which is inhabited by Iban from the Ulu Batang Ai (and the headwaters of the Kanyau, a tributary of the Kapuas), constitutes what we may call a tribal area. Although all of its 11,350 members are not *kaban*, in the narrow sense, the degree of interrelatedness is high, and an intricate net-work of kindred ties spreads throughout the entire region. The majority of the inhabitants of the Baleh are thus kindred in the wider sense of being *juru* and *sukn*. Again, there is a very marked tendency for marriages, even when they are not between recognizable *kaban*, to be between men and women who are both inhabitants of the Baleh. For example, of the 25 marriages from Rumah Nyala, recorded in Table 20, 47 of the 50 spouses had grown up in the Baleh area.

100. A significant feature of Iban social structure in pioneer districts is the wide territorial dispersal of close kindred. This is especially pronounced in the Baleh. Let us take the example of Jarau, a lad of about eight years, who is a member of Rumah Nyala, of the Sungai Sut. Jarau 612

612 has first cousins living in the Mujong, Tiau and Melinau Rivers, about 40 miles away by river distance; and third cousins living in the head-waters of the Baleh, and the Merirai and Gat Rivers, more than 50 miles away. In other words, these kindred relationships, though only of third cousin range, cover all of the main tributaries of the Baleh, and an area of many hundred square miles.

612 101. Another factor which helps to consolidate the kindred is the custom of adoption.
647 As we have already seen adoption is a widely prevalent phenomenon in Iban society, occurring in about 36% of *bilek-families;* and, moreover, with but rare exceptions, adopted individuals are always the children of near kin. Table 7, gives a detailed analysis of 48 cases of adoption from the three long-houses of our sample, and shows that adoptions of the off-spring of siblings, first, second and third cousins, account for 87% of the total. The relationship to an adopted individual may be either through males or females, and it is just as likely to stem from the *pun bilek* of a family, as from one of its affinal members. Again, although adoption almost always occurs within the kindred, the kin concerned may be either living in the same long-house, or be members of different communities. Table 21, which is based on an analysis of 32 recent cases of adoption, for which trustworthy data were available, indicates that adoption from beyond the local community is the slightly more prevalent of the two types.

TABLE 21: ADOPTION.

Long-house.	*Adoptions between kin who are members of the same long-house.*	*Adoptions between kin who are members of different long-houses.*
Rumah Nyala	3	7
Rumah Sibat	6	2
Rumah Tungku	6	8
Totals:	15	17

An adopted individual possesses the same rights as those conferred by birth, and is a full jural member of his adoptive *bilek-family*. It is usual however, for the true parents to maintain an active interest in the well-being of their child, and to pay him occasional visits. In this way the institution of adoption strengthens bonds already existing within the kindred, and particularly, when the kin concerned are distantly related, or members of different long-houses. As the Iban themselves put it: "If adoption takes place, kindred become close again; if there is no adoption, they become more and more distant and turn into strangers;" ("*Enti bisi ngambo anak, damping baru kabah; enti enda ngambo, jauh se jauh, nyadi orang bukai*"). The same sort of statement could be applied to the custom of marrying within the kindred.

The Formation of Long-House Communities.

621 102. We have now examined briefly the nature of the kindreds whichh characterize Iban society, and the manner in which they are consolidated by the prevalence of marriage and adoption between close kin. To what extent, it may be asked, do the members of a kindred live together in the same long-house? This is not a question which can be readily answered in general terms, for the pattern of kinship ties in a long-house of any size are extremely complicated, and defy simple description. Let us direct our attention therefore, to a detailed examination of the kinship structure of a single long-house community, taking as our example, Rumah Nyala, of the Sungai Sut. This has the advantage that it forms a frame-work for the subsequent sections of this report, for it is to Rumah Nyala, that most of my data on shifting cultivation refer.

621 103. Although it would be an overstatement to describe the Iban as nomadic, migratory
166 they certainly are, for, during the past 130 years, the people we are here discussing have travelled from the head-waters of the Batang Ai and Kanyau, by way of the Katibas and Rejang, to occupy the Baleh and its tributaries. For example, Temenggong Koh, who was born at Pulau Ensulit in the Ulu Kanyau (then Dutch Borneo), is now (1951), farming virgin jungle on the western bank of the Baleh, some five miles above Nanga Putai, and distant more than 200 miles, by river, from the place of his birth. The main incentive behind the remarkable migrations of the Iban has been a desire to exploit new tracts of primeval forest, and the tendency has been for communities to abandon their land as soon as a few lucrative harvests have been reaped, and move on to fresh precincts. In this way, the frontier of advance was pushed forward, first by one community, and then by another moving up from the rear. All these communities, it should be noted, were sections of the same tribe, and their members were all inter-related, in varying degrees, by cognatic ties. When the advance reached the extensive, and virtually unoccupied valley of the Rejang above the mouth of the Katibas, and particularly when the Baleh and its tributaries were opened to settlement, the possibilities before a *bilek-family* were numerous. Any of a dozen or more long-houses, each occupying a different tract of virgin land, and each containing recognized kin, were potential places of abode. As an autonomous unit, a *bilek-family* might join any of these various long-houses, where kith or kin were already members, and so it happened that *bilek-families* often set off, either singly, or in twos or threes, to attach themselves to some long-house, the situation of which they considered especially advantageous. Provided certain essential ritual formalities had been observed, a *bilek-family* was free to leave one long-house, and join another, whenever it desired. Such independent movement was frequently resorted

to, and when a whole community decided to shift to a new territory, it was seldom, if ever, that all its *bilek-families* remained together. Although the majority usually continued their old association, almost always some would detach themselves, and disperse to separate destinations. 621 166

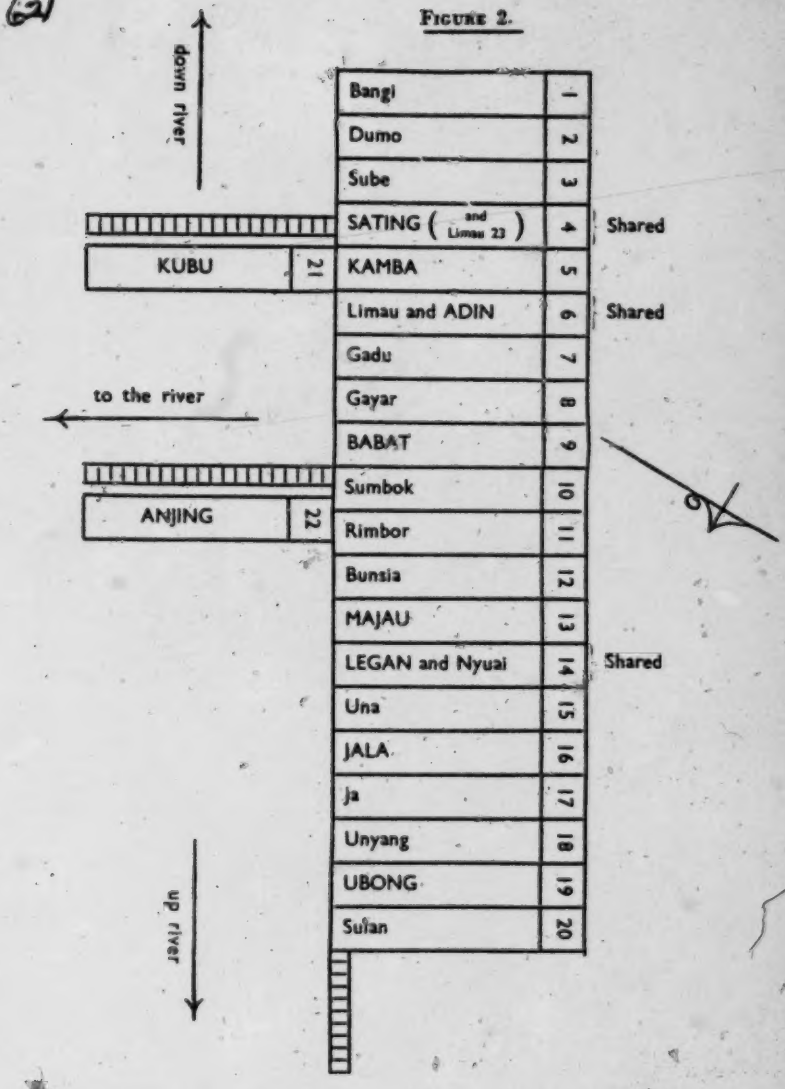
104. From these observations it will be seen that it becomes very important to investigate the history of a long-house, if we are to reach an understanding of its social structure. Despite the fact that the Baleh Iban are entirely non-literate, it is still possible to secure fairly reliable historical data, for all the existing long-houses on the Baleh and its tributaries, were founded subsequent to mid-1922, when the Iban were first permitted to re-settle the area after the insurrections of the years 1915—1919. This means that no Baleh long-house was more than 30 years old at the time (1949—1951) when my investigations were being carried out. It was possible therefore to collect, from members of the senior generation, detailed first-hand accounts of the various long-houses which I selected for study. My investigations show that the setting up of the pioneer long-house is almost always the undertaking of a small group of *bilek-families*. Usually they are fewer than ten in number. Furthermore, they are invariably a compact group, their members being inter-related by intimate ties of kinship. For example, the various *bileks* commonly contain individuals who are either siblings, or first or second cousins. These pioneer *bilek-families*, we may term *the founding group* of a long-house. The importance of this founding group is profound, for the *bilek-families* of which it is composed continue to exert a decisive influence, even although the long-house subsequently increases considerably in size. Once a new long-house has become successfully established, and especially if it has access to tracts of virgin land, other *bilek-families*, from less favourable areas, will attach themselves to it. Typically, they they arrive one by one over the course of the years, and build on to one end or other of the existing long-house. These late-comers are always related to the founding group. That is, one of their members—natal, adopted or affinal—has some sort of cognatic tie with one of the members of the founding *bilek-families*. By this process of accretion, a long-house community gradually increases in size, and in the complexity of its social structure. But, sooner or later, it reaches an optimum stage of development, and then, as its land becomes exhausted, odd *bileks* will begin to break away and move off to join long-houses on the frontier of advance, where there is unclaimed virgin forest waiting to be felled and farmed. As already noted, remote, up-river communities tend to be larger than those that occupy areas where the original jungle has been very largely worked out; and it is the pioneer settlements which grow most rapidly in size. A good example is Rumah Sibat. This house had its beginning in 1924, when six *bilek-families*, from the long-house of Penghulu Koh, in Sungai Dia, below Kapit, settled in one of the lower reaches of the Sungai Melinau, a tributary of the Mujong. Before them lay thousands of acres of untouched forest land. By 1950, the original six *bileks*—by the two processes of accretion and partition—had become 32. In addition, four other long-house communities are now settled in the Sungai Melinau. 621 361

The Formation of Rumah Nyala, of the Sungai Sut.

105. Rumah Nyala, the long-house in which we are particularly interested, lies some four to five miles from the mouth of the Sungai Sut, where it was founded in the years, 1922—23. Its exact site is a terrace on the northern (i.e. true right) bank of the Sut, about three hundred yards down-river from a small tributary stream called the Sungai Luba. A residence plan of Rumah Nyala, as in May, 1950, appears as Figure 2. Each numbered section is a *bilek*, or family apartment. In all but one case, the name of the *pun bilek* (*c.f.*: Para. 48), or the senior natal member of the occupying family is given. The exception is apartment No. 18, where the name of a widow (whose children are still very young) appears instead. It will be noted that there were 20 separate family apartments in one line, giving the house a total length of just over 100 yards. Two apartments—No. 6 and No. 14—were occupied by families still sharing the same *bilek*, despite the fact that partition had taken place. These were temporary arrangements, pending the construction of new quarters; in each case both families had built, and were occupying separate farm houses (*dampa*) and farm huts (*langkau*). Two families—No. 21 and No. 22—both recent arrivals at Rumah Nyala, had built on to the *tanju* of the main long-house; and one other family of newcomers—No. 23—were sharing apartment No. 4, which belonged to long-standing members of Rumah Nyala, who happened to be their kin. There were thus three bilek-families (out of a total of 25), which were not provided with apartments of their own in the main long-house. A similar state of affairs is encountered at most Iban long-houses. This draws attention to the important point that a bilek-family is essentially a jurally defined unit, and that its existence does not depend on actual ownership of a long-house apartment. However, it is the ambition of every family to own a *bilek* of its own, and its members always strive to build private quarters as soon as they can after arriving from another area, or after partition has occurred. 621

106. The Kinship composition of the 25 *bilek-families* of Rumah Nyala is recorded in Figure 3.* All 140 members of the community appear. Each family is enclosed in its own *bilek*, and, as far as possible, the actual residential, or territorial arrangement of the families has been followed. Thus the *bilek-families* occupying apartments No. 1—No. 20, are shown in one straight line, just as in the long-house itself. Families No. 21, No. 22 and No. 23, are shown slightly detached, and for their separate sites, Figure 2, should be consulted. The exact composition of each bilek-family is defined by an encircling line. In addition, a few of the principal cognatic ties between neighbouring families have been recorded; but, of necessity, only a limited number of these ties have been included, for in a residential plan of this kind it is not feasible to draw in all of the intricate bilateral links that do, in fact, exist; if this were done, the lines would be so numerous and crossed as to make the plan unintelligible.

FIGURE 2.



RESIDENCE PLAN OF RUMAH NYALA, SUNGAI SUT

621

107. The recording of cognatic relationships is best achieved in a formal genealogy, and this has been done in Figure 4.* Here, the emphasis is upon kinship as such, and the genealogy only indirectly reflects the territorial arrangement of *bilek-families*. Again, even this genealogy is markedly selective, for it has been constructed to illustrate the nature of the most significant cognatic relationships existing within Rumah Nyala, and linkages with kindred living in other long-houses have been deliberately omitted. In both plan (Figure 3) and genealogy (Figure 4), all marriages are marked with arrows; these arrows indicate whether the marriage concerned is virilocal (e.g. ○ ═ △), or uxorilocal (○ ═ △).(20) It is possible, therefore, to identify all those who are members of a *bilek-family* by virtue of descent, or adoption, as against those who are affinal members. (Adoption is indicated by a zig-zag line). It should be observed that in several cases the cognatic ties which have determined long-house residence, are traced primarily through an affinal member of the *bilek* (No. 9, No. 10 and No. 22, are examples); to this cardinal feature of Iban social structure we shall presently return.

108. Let us now subject the genealogy (Figure 4) to more detailed scrutiny. It contains six different generation levels, and these have been lettered: A, B, C, D, E and F. The members of generations A and B, are now all dead, and the surviving members of generation C, are the present great-grandparents and grandparents of Rumah Nyala; their average age is about 55 years, with a range of from 40 to 70 years. Generation D, is made up of parents, ranging from 25 to 45 years in age, with an average of about 35 years. Generation E, are children of all ages, and a few newly married couples. Generation F, contains only one or two young children of under three years of age, who are the great-grandchildren of Generation C. The numbers which appear against certain names in the genealogy refer to the *bilek-families*, of which the individuals concerned are members, and coincide with the system of numbering employed in Figures 2 and 3. By comparing the genealogy with these plans, the relation between kinship and residential alignment within the long-house can be discerned without difficulty. The genealogy (Figure 4), includes individuals from 21 (or 85%) of the 25 *bilek-families* of Rumah Nyala. By extending collateral lines still further, it would have been possible to include all bileks, but for reasons of space this has not been done. Of those *bileks* which have been omitted, Bangi and Gasan, of No. 1 and No. 2, are fourth cousins of Babat of No. 9; Payeng, of No. 17, is a third cousin of Kamba, of No. 5; and Abut, of No. 23, is a cross-cousin of Sinoh, of No. 4. In the genealogy only the senior members of *bilek-families* are shown, but in all cases, their complete families appear in Figure 3. In the discussion that follows, the genealogy (Figure 4) and residential plan (Figure 3), should be used in conjunction with one another.

109. Equipped with these data it is now possible to give a short and simplified account of the founding, and subsequent social history of Rumah Nyala. The community had its origin in the year 1922, when a group of 14 *bilek-families* from Sungai Kapit (a tributary stream of the Batang Rejang, just below the present settlement at Kapit) moved (*mindah*) up river, and settled on the banks of the Sut River. (When such a move takes place the various families usually live in scattered huts for a year or more, and only after a harvest of rice has been reaped, and the necessary materials been collected, do they set about the building of a long-house). Four of the original 14 *bileks* have since left to join other Baleh long-houses, but 10 still remain. They were, in 1922: (21).

No. of bilek in residential plan (Figure 3).	*Name of pun bilek.*	*Name of husband or wife of pun bilek.*
6	*Demi*	*PIOH*
10	Sumbok	NYALA
11	Rimbor	*TABO*
7	Gadu	ALONG
8	Gayar	DEMANG
9	BABAT	Punai
15	*NYOH*	Uhum
16	(UNA and Madu: amalgamated *bilek*).	
2	Dumo	GASAN
1	Bangi	*LADONG*

A glance at the genealogy (Figure 4), will show that the first eight of these ten *bileks* are very closely related. But it will be seen that the relationships are through affines, just as frequently as they are through *pun bileks*. The brothers Nyoh and Una, are first cousins of Demi; while Nyala and Rimbor (brother and sister) are first cousins of Demi's husband, Pioh. A similar relationship links the siblings, Gayar, Along and Punai, with Nyala and Rimbor. Thus eight bileks are joined by three first cousin ties. The connection of the remaining two *bileks* (i.e. No. 1 and No. 2) is more remote, Bangi and her brother, Gasan, being fourth cousins of Babat.

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* *Figures 3 and 4 are to be found in a pocket at the end of this volume.*

(20) In passing, it is of interest to note that of the 51 marriages appearing in the genealogy (Figure 4), 25 are uxorilocal, and 26 are virilocal.

(21) Only the names of the *pun bilek*, and his or her spouse are given. In some cases the individuals concerned are now dead, and their names are shown *in italics*. Males are in CAPITALS.

110. The leader of this pioneer group was Pioh, the husband of Demi, and Pioh, it was, who became the *tuai rumah*, or house headman. We have seen that in Iban society, men and women have equal rights of inheritance within the *bilek*, but that in practice women come to occupy the position of *pun bilek*, slightly more often than do men. Only men, however, may hold political office. Thus the tuai rumah, or head of an Iban community is always a man.[22] Furthermore, the fact that a man is practising uxorilocal residence, in no way prejudices his eligibility for the office of *tuai rumah*. Because of the system of ambilateral filiation, election to political office is not controlled by any particular dogma of descent. Under Iban *adat*, a *tuai rumah* is always one of the kindred, but any male cognate is eligible for selection, whether he be living in his natal *bilek*, or not. Both Pioh, and his successor Nyala, are examples of *tuai rumah*, practising uxorilocal marriage. An Iban long-house community is commonly called after its *tuai rumah*, the name changing with each new holder of the office. Rumah Nyala, for example, was formerly known as Rumah Pioh, and it was only in 1937, when, following Pioh's death,[23] his cross-cousin Nyala was selected as successor, that the present name came into vogue.

111. About a year after the arrival of Pioh and his followers in the Sungai Sut, they were augmented by a group of five *bilek-families* led by Ikok. This second group (originally from Sungai Dia), had settled a few miles further up-stream, but following the murder of one of their number, they abandoned their encampment there (believing it to be inauspicious), and moved down to join Pioh. This event can be dated with accuracy, for the murder is recorded in the Sibu District Report, for January, 1923,[24] and the move took place immediately afterwards. Ikok's group was as follows: (c.f. Footnote No. 21, p. 35).

No. of bilek in residential plan. (Figure 3).	*Name of pun bilek.*	*Name of husband or wife of pun bilek.*
5	***IKOK***	**Bunyang**
4	***Igong***	***ADING***
21	***Jelo***	***JAYA***
14	***NYAT***	**Mayang**
20	**Sulan**	**SAIT**

Here again, we are dealing with closely related kin. Ading is the brother of Ikok, and Jaya his paternal uncle, while Nyat's father Jukut, was the first cousin of Jaya's wife, Jelo. Sulan, however, is a more remote relative, being a fourth cousin of Ikok.

112. The merging of Ikok's group of *bilek-families*, with those led by Pioh, was an understandable process, for they were all members of the same extensive kindred. If the genealogy (Figure 4) is consulted, it will be noted, for example, that Kubu (the adopted son of Jaya and Jelo) is a second cousin both to Gayar and Nyala—and their respective siblings. Again certain marriages between members of the two groups had taken place: Merum[25] (the maternal uncle of Ikok's, had married Krai (the elder sister of Nyala); Tabo (the brother of Jelo), had married Rimbot (also a sister of Nyala); and Gadu (second cousin of Kubu), had married Along (brother of Gayar and Punai). When a permanent long-house was constructed, Pioh became *tuai rumah* (house headman) of the combined group (numbering 15 bileks), while Ikok filled the important role of *tuai burong*, or augur. It is significant to note that the two men came to occupy contiguous apartments (No. 5 and No. 6), and that this was soon followed by the marriage of Pioh's daughter, Tipong, to Ikok's son, Kamba. In due course they had grandchildren in common, and so the reconsolidation of their ties of kinship was complete.

113. During subsequent years, six further *bileks* joined the long-house, but they came one by one. Three (No. 12, No. 17 and No. 18), arrived during the lifetime of Pioh, and three more (No 13, No. 22, and No. 23) have come since Nyala became *tuai rumah* in 1937. These six *bileks*, in the order of their arrival were: (c.f. Footnote No. 21).

No. of bilek. (Fig. 3)	*Name of pun bilek.*	*Name of husband, or wife of pun bilek.*	*Principal relationship to existing members of long-house.*
17	Ja	PAYENG	PAYENG, 3rd cousin of KAMBA.
12	Bunsia	—	Bunsia, 2nd cousin of KAMBA.
18	*MAJIN*	Unyang	*MAJIN*, brother of DEMANG.
13	MAJAU	Lindan	Lindan, adopted daughter of Gayar.
22	Anjing	SABAN	SABAN, 2nd cousin of Gadu, KUBU and UBONG.
23	(*AKING*)	Abut	Abut, 1st cousin of Sinoh.

(22) Exceptions to this rule have, perhaps occurred. I did hear stories of communities which had had female leaders, but nowhere in Sarawak did I actually encounter such a case.

(23) *Sarawak Gazette*, 1937, p. 157.

(24) *Sarawak Gazette*, 1923, p. 141: "Sak, a Dayak, was speared by Ila in his house in the Sut." (Sak, was the brother of Sulan, of *bilek* No. 20 of the present Rumah Nyala, and one of the followers of Ikok, above).

(25) This is Penghulu Merum, the famous rebel leader of the years 1906—1915.

114. These six *bileks*, all of which joined the present Rumah Nyala, subsequent to its foundation in the years 1922—23, came from widely scattered parts of the Baleh, but all of them—it will be noted—had at least one close kinship tie with existing members of the house. This directs attention to the fact that when a *bilek-family* decides to change its place of abode, it always seeks out a long-house containing other kinsfolk, through whom the necessary arrangements are made, and who can be relied upon to give help where it is needed. However, these kinsfolk may be of the kindreds of any of the *natal, adopted* or *affinal* members of the *bilek-families* concerned. For example, for three of the six *bileks* listed above (Para.113), the relationship is through one of their affines (e.g. Payeng, Lindan and Saban) to a natal member of Rumah Nyala, and in one case, the link is between two affines, who are cross-cousins (e.g. Abut and Sinoh). These instances are evidence of the wide range of possibilities which Iban social organization offers to a *bilek-family*, should it decide to change its place of abode, and move to another long-house. 621

115. A special word of explanation is needed for *bilek No. 21*, the present *pun bilek* of which is Kubu. Kubu, inherited this position from Jelo, his adoptive mother, who, with her husband Jaya, formed one of the founding families of the present Rumah Nyala. After some years, Jelo and her family moved away to a house further up the Sut River, but in 1950—by which time Jelo had been succeeded by her adopted son, Kubu—the *bilek* returned to re-join Rumah Nyala. These are the events which account for the fact that Kubu's *bilek* is not part of the main long-house, but is, instead, built on to the *tanju* (c.f. Figure 2). It is noteworthy, that the portion of the *tanju* selected by Kubu, is that belonging to Kamba, the son of Kubu's first cousin, Ikok.

116. Finally, mention must be made of four new *bileks* which have come into being by process of partition, since the founding of Rumah Nyala, about 28 years ago. These are:

No. of bilek in residential plan (Figure 3).	*Name of pun bilek*	*Nature of Partition.*
19	UBONG	partition from *bilek* No. 11
3	Sube	partition from *bilek* No. 2
6a	ADIN	partition from *bilek* No. 6
14a	Nyuai	partition from *bilek* No. 14

117. We are now in a position to summarize. Rumah Nyala, as it existed in 1950, was made up of 25 distinct *bilek-families*, and these may be divided into three different categories:

I. *Founding bileks.*
- (a) Pioh's group — 10 (comprising Nos. 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15 and 16).
- (b) Ikok's group — 5 (comprising Nos. 4, 5, 14, 20 and 21).

II. *Bileks resulting from the partition of four of the above founding bileks.*
— 4 (comprising Nos. 3, 6a, 14a and 19).

III. *Bileks which have arrived from other long-houses.*
— 6 (comprising Nos. 12, 13, 17, 18, 22 and 23).

TOTAL — 25

Kinship, and the Residential Plan of a Long-House.

118. Bearing these facts in mind let us return to the residential plan of Rumah Nyala (Figures 2 and 3). Even a cursory examination will show that the positions occupied by the various *bileks* are not haphazard, and that kinship is an important factor in determining a family's exact place of residence. Furthermore, it will be observed that most of the founding *bileks* still form a compact block. This feature is even more marked than is immediately apparent, for apartments No. 3, No. 12 and No. 13, were formerly owned and occupied by founding families, which have since moved to other long-houses, and only on their departure did these apartments come into the possession of the *bilek-families* now living in them. However, each of the new families has a member (Jimbau, Bunsia and Lindau, respectively) closely related to the other founding *bileks*. It will be noticed, that among the various founding families, those which contain siblings, occupy neighbouring apartments. This arrangement is followed even though one of the siblings is an affinal member of his or her *bilek-family*. Thus Nyala (*bilek* No. 10), the husband of Sumbok, is found next to his sister, Rimbor (*bilek* No. 11), who has become *pun bilek*, in succession to their mother Bajik. Similarly, Along (*bilek* No. 7) and Punai (*bilek* No. 9), both affines, are grouped on either side of their sister, Gayar (*bilek* No. 8), who has inherited the *bilek* of their father, Ngeging. Other examples are Una and Nyoh (*bileks* No. 15 and No. 16), Ikok and Ading (*bileks* No. 4 and No. 5), and Bangi and Gasan (*bileks* No. 1 and No. 2).

119. Such arrangements as these are found in most long-houses, for it is one of the established rules of Iban society that, as far as possible, siblings (who are members of the same long-house), should occupy contiguous apartments. This rule is expressed in a ritual prohibition, termed *pemali* 621 784

621 784 *kepit*. According to this *pemali*, it is forbidden for any less closely related individual to interpose himself between siblings (*menyadi tampong pala*). This applies both to apartments in a long-house, and to farms (*umai*) on adjoining hill-sides. The sanction is a supernatural one. The word *kepit* means 'to squeeze,' and it is believed that any family which interposes itself between two siblings will inevitably be punished,—that one or more of its members will fall sick, and die; and a blight descend on all its affairs. It is rather as though siblings were joined by a mystical bond, with which it is dangerous for others to interfere. Indeed, it is held that the community as a whole may become affected. The long-house becomes 'heated' (*rumah angat*), the Iban say, and this unbenign ritual state is liable to cause all manner of suffering and misfortune. The prohibition is at its most stringent for siblings, but it also applies, though to a lesser extent, to cousins. For example, when Payeng's *padi* crop failed in 1949, one of the reasons advanced by the people of Rumah Nyala, was that his farm was situated between those of Kamba and Jimbau, who are second cousins. As is usual with most taboos, the sanction only operates when someone deliberately breaks the prohibition. Thus when a *bilek-family*, arriving from another area, contains a sibling of one of the existing members of the long-house, it is not expected that all the families of the community should re-arrange themselves, so as to let the two siblings live side by side. In such a case (Demang and Majin, of *bileks* No. 8 and 18, are an example), the circumstances are accepted as insuperable, and no harm results. However, whenever a long-house is dismantled and re-erected (a process which seems to take place about once every 20 to 30 years), or moved to another territory, it is recognized that every effort must then be made to see that siblings and close cousins occupy contiguous, or neighbouring apartments. This rule was certainly observed at the founding of the present Rumah Nyala, for at the centre of the house, we find a consellation of *bilek-families*, inter-connected by sibling, and first and second cousin links. This tendency means that more remote kin are pushed outwards, so that in Rumah Nyala, the extremities of the long-house are occupied by the *bilek-families* of third and fourth cousins, like Baingi and Gasan, Payeng and Sulan.

Marriage Within The Long-House Community.

621 612 582 120. We have now seen that the founding group of a long-house community is composed of a series of *bilek-families*, whose members are closely related cognatic kin.(26) Furthermore, if other families subsequently attach themselves, they almost always have some kind of kinship tie with one of the founders. In the course of time these initial ties are augmented by the advent of marriages within the long-house. Iban custom, with but few exceptions (Para. 94), both permits and encourages marriage within the kindred and there is no sentiment of any kind which opposes the marriage of members of the same long-house community, as long as the rule governing incest are not borken. The long-house then, is, in no sense, an exogamous group. Indeed there is a marked tendency for men and women to marry within their own long-house. When such marriages occur, residence may be either virilocal or uxorilocal. An analysis of 86 contemporary marriages (all of which I was able to observe at first hand), in the three long-houses Rumah Nyala, Rumah Sibai and Rumah Tungku, gives the following results:

TABLE 22. MARRIAGE.

Long-house.	*Marriages within the long-house.*	*Marriages outside the long-house.*
Rumah Nyala	13	12
Rumah Sibai	11	12
Rumah Tungku	18	20
Totals:	42	44

Of this total of 86 unions, 42 were virilocal marriages, and 44 uxorilocal—an even balancing which once more demonstrates the prevalence of ambilateral filiation in Iban society.

121. In this Table, the incidence of intra-long-house marriage (42), and extra-long-house marriage (44) is approximately equal. That intra-long-house unions should reach such a high proportion of the total is, however, evidence of a definite preference for the contracting of marriages within the local community. Cognatic ties, it has been remarked, ramify over a wide area (i.e. the whole of the Baleh), and an individual's kindred is likely to contain hundreds of different relatives. To illustrate this let us consider the theoretical paradigm of a kindred that includes up to 5th cousins. Such a kindred will contain the descendants of 32 great-great-great-grandparents, and if it is supposed that each couple produces one son and one daughter, each of whom marries to produce a daughter and a son, and so on, after five generations there will be a body of cousins numbering 1,364. The Iban birth rate considerably exceeds that assumed in this theoretical example, and it is certain that five generation kindreds commonly include more than a thousand members. Not all of these individuals are known to one another personally, but, on meeting, any two of them would probably be able to establish that they were *kaban*. It is clear, that within the kindred, potential marriage partners number many scores. In addition there are the hundreds of other members of the tribe to whom relationship cannot be traced. These also, are potential partners, but marriages within this category, as has been pointed out, occur in only about 25% of cases. On the other hand, possible spouses within the long-house—whether related or unrelated

(26) It is not possible, for reasons of space, to give a detailed analysis of the history and social structure of Rumah Sibai and Rumah Tungku, but it may be remarked that for both houses, the founding group was similar to that described for Rumah Nyala.

—are very limited in number. Obviously this will vary with the size of the long-house. In Ruman Nyala, which with its 25 *bilek-families* ranks as a large community, there were only 14 individuals (seven males and seven females), fifteen years of age and over, who were unmarried. And of these, two of the men were ineligible as husbands (one being a moron, and the other simple-minded), while one of the females was a dessicated divorcee of about 45 years, unlikely to stir the passions of a young man's heart. Of the remainder, the females were girls with an average age of just under 18 years, while the males were young men with an average age of about 23 years. The highest number of possible spouses, for any of the young men, was six; while for the young women it was only five. This means that potential partners from the same long-house, comprised not more than about 5% of the total number available, and even in the case of larger communities, it is unlikely that this proportion rises much above 10%. If these circumstances are borne in mind, the figures recorded in Table 22, acquire their proper significance, for they show that approximately 50% of marriages takes place within the local community, which contains only about 5%—10% of the total number of possible spouses. This is convincing evidence of a strong preference for marrying within the long-house. Indeed, it may be said, that the Iban long-house community tends to be an endogamous group, although there are no formal rules aimed at producing this state of affairs.[27]

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122. Let us now examine more closely, 25 marriages, all of which have taken place since the foundation of Rumah Nyala in 1922. In 13 of these 25 marriages, both of the spouses were members of the same long-house, and, with few exceptions, they were the children—either true or adopted—of founding members. The exceptions were four marriages, in which one of the spouses was an offspring of a *bilek-family* that joined Rumah Nyala in subsequent years. All 13 marriages are laid out in detail below, and in each instance, the natal or adoptive *bilek* of each spouse is recorded. The *bilek* numbers refer to the residential plan (Figure 3); from this the descent of one of the partners can be found, and notes identify the parents of the other.

Name of husband.	*No. of bilek. (natal)*	*Name of wife.*	*Name of bilek. (natal)*	*Type of marriage.*	*Notes.*
Usah	1	Bangan	15	Virilocal	.. Bangan, sister of Madu.
Jimbau	12	Sube	2	Uxorilocal	.. Jimbau, adopted brother of Bettsia.
Sating	4	Menun	22	Virilocal	.. Menun, daughter of Anjing and Saban.
Lasa	7	Punge	5	Uxorilocal	.. Lasa, son of Gadu and Langut.
Kamba	5	Tipong	6	Virilocal	.. Tipong, daughter of Pioh and Demi.
Sanggau	10	Nantai	17	Virilocal	.. Nantai, daughter of Ja and Payeng.
Japok	14	Lintu	10	Uxorilocal	.. Japok, son of Nyat and Mayeng.
Lempong	8	Lema	1	Virilocal	.. Lama, adopted daughter of Usah and Bangan.
Entap	12	Rabai	5	Virilocal	.. Rabai, daughter of Pioh and Demi.
Jala	16	Bali	4	Virilocal	.. Bali, adopted daughter of Melaka and Sinoh.
Nyanggau	16	Unsai	22	Virilocal	.. Unsai, daughter of Anjing and Saban.
Ubong	11	Chandut	16	Virilocal	.. Ubong, the adopted son of Rimbor and Tabo; .. Chandut, the adopted daughter of Nyoh and Ulum.
Ukit	11	Limau	16	Virilocal	.. Ukit, adopted by Sait and Sulan; Limau, adopted daughter of Nyoh and Ulum.

123. One of the most important functions of intra-long-house marriage is that it consolidates *bilek-families* into a more closely inter-related community. This is particularly so when such marriages result in the birth of children, and the founding of new elementary families. Of the 13 unions listed above, all but two (and these were very recent marriages) had produced children. Between those whose children marry one another a new relationship is brought into being, and this relationship is further strengthened when, in the course of time, they come to have grandchildren in common. This is fully recognized in Iban custom, and persons whose children marry (e.g. Anjing, the mother of Menun, and Sinoh, the mother of Sating, of *bileks* No. 22 and No. 4), address one another by a special kinship term: *isan*, which expresses the relationship of inter-dependence which exists between them. Again, a similar relationship is established between the siblings of the two spouses, who address one another as: *ipar*—a term which is applied to affinal siblings, both male and female. These marriages frequently result in the birth of children who form groupings of first cousins in the same long-house. Rumah Nyala, provides a good example of this in the four children of Demi and Pioh (ref. *bilek* No. 6). Pioh, it will be remembered, was one of the founders of the present long-house, and its *tuai rumah* (or headman) until his death in 1937. Two of Pioh's daughters have married within their natal community (i.e. Tipong, the wife of Kamba, and Rabai, the wife of Entap, of *bileks* No. 5 and No. 12 respectively), while his son Adin, and daughter Limau, although they have married spouses from other areas, have both remained in Rumah Nyala, each controlling a part of their parents' *bilek*. All of these marriages

(27) Dr. Edmund Leach, in his exploratory survey of the social structure of the indigenous peoples of Sarawak, suggested that the Iban long-house group might perhaps be exogamous (Report, 1950, Para 294). It will be seen that intensive investigation has proved that this is not the case.

621 have produced offspring, and in 1950, there were ten children in the four different *bilek-families*, all of whom were joined by sibling and first cousin ties.[28] Because of the inter-marriage of its 612 members, a long-house gradually becomes a more and more closely knit community. The various 602 marriages occurring within Rumah Nyala, have been evenly distributed over the years that have elapsed since the house was founded: three took place prior to 1930, five during the next decade, and five during the past ten years. There is every reason to believe that the process will continue for as long as Rumah Nyala survives.

The Inter-Relatedness of the Bilek-Families of a Long-House Community.

621 124. By recounting the history of Rumah Nyala, by analysing the composition of its founding groups, and by recording instances of inter-marriage, we have shown that the *bilek-families* of an Iban long-house community are inter-related by a complex net-work of cognatic ties. Let us now 622 attempt to express this inter-relatedness in more specific terms, by measuring the degree of inter-relatedness of *all* the *bilek-families* of the long-house. Table 23, lists the 23 *bilek-families* which made up Rumah Nyala in the year 1950, and registers the number of kinship ties which each *bilek* had with other *bileks* of the long-house. These ties are *bilaterally* reckoned, from the *natal, adopted* and *affinal* members of each *bilek-family*. Kinship ties have been analysed under four separate headings: (*a*). sibling ties, (*b*). 1st cousin ties, (*c*). 2nd cousin ties, and (*d*). all cognatic ties. It is important to note that such ties of 1st cousinship as have been recorded, are ties other than those resulting from the sibling ties listed under heading (*a*); and similarly, the ties of second cousinship are ties other than those resulting from the 1st cousin relationships appearing under heading (*b*). Heading (*d*), *includes* all ties up to and including 5th cousins.

Table 23: Bilek-Family Inter-Relatedness.

No. of bilek.	*Name of pun bilek.*	*Ties with other bilek-families of long-house.*			
		(a). *No. of sibling ties.*	(b). *No. of 1st cousin ties.*	(c). *No. of 2nd cousin ties.*	(d). *Total No. of cognatic ties.*
1.	Bangi	2	—	2	6
2.	Dumo	?	—	2	5
3.	Sube	2	1	6	12
4.	Sating	2	3	5	13
5.	Kamba	4	3	11	20
6.	Limau	3	2	5	19
6a.	Adin	3	—	4	10
7.	Gadu	2	3	4	19
8.	Gayar	5	2	10	20
9.	Babat	2	3	1	20
10.	Sumbok	4	6	5	17
11.	Rimbor	3	5	8	19
12.	Bunsia	4	—	8	16
13.	Majau	1	—	10	18
14	Legan	2	—	—	13
14a.	Nyuai	2	—	—	13
15.	Una and Madu	2	2	—	8
16.	Jala	4	2	2	11
17.	Ja	1	—	—	14
18.	(Majin)	1	—	—	13
19.	Ubong	2	4	9	21
20.	Sulan	2	4	6	19
21.	Kubu	1	3	4	17
22.	Angkit	2	—	3	5
23.	(Aking)	—	1	—	18

(28) Tamap, the adopted son of Limau (*bilek* No. 6), is the true son of Limau's sister, Tipong, the wife of Kamba (bilek No. 5).

125. This Table 23, may be summarized by saying that among the 25 *bilek-families* of Rumah Nyala, there existed: 29 sibling links, 22 first cousin links, and 54 second cousin links. If all types of cognatic kinship are included, there was a total of 183 links of various kinds, ranging from siblingship to relationships between fifth cousins. A more precise measure of the degree of inter-relatedness of the *bilek-families* of Rumah Nyala may be obtained, if these 25 units are so tabulated as to show the presence of cognatic links, where they exist, between each *bilek-family* and the 24 others, which constitute the long-house community. This has been done in Table 24. All known relationships have been recorded. Although ties reckoned from the affinal members of a *bilek* are included, beyond this point, only direct cognatic links have been admitted. In other words, we are dealing with all the known relationships, through either male or female links which join the members of *bilek-families*, be they members by right of birth, adoption or marriage. A cross (x), at the intersection of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of Table 24, records the existence of such a tie between the two *bilek-families* concerned. For example, *bilek* No. 3, has ties with *bileks* Nos. 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, and 23. In a few instances, there are two different ties between the same *bileks*: for example, Kamba (of *bilek* No. 5), is the second cousin of Lempong (of *bilek* No. 8), while Lempong's wife, Lema, is the sister of Sawing the husband of Punge, Kamba's adopted sister. Such cases are not common however, and for the great majority of bileks, the marking in of a cross (x), indicates only one relationship.

TABLE 24: *Inter-Relatedness of Bilek-Families, of Rumah Nyala.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	6a	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	14a	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
2	X																								
3		X																							
4			X																						
5	X	X	X	X																					
6					X																				
6a					X	X																			
7			X		X	X	X																		
8	X	X	X	X	X	X		X																	
9	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X																
10					X	X	X	X	X	X															
11			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X														
12			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X													
13			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X												
14					X		X	X	X	X	X		X												
14a						X		X	X	X	X		X	X											
15	X				X	X	X						X												
16			X	X	X	X	X						X				X								
17			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X											
18						X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X									
19				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
20	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
21				X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X			
22				X				X											X			X	X		
23			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X		

126. It will be observed that if each *bilek-family* were related to each of the 24 others, that the total number of relationships would be 300 $\left[\text{i.e } \frac{25 \times 24}{2}\right]$. This would represent complete, or 100% inter-relatedness. It is doubtful if any but the smallest of long-houses reach this level, but some, certainly, approach very close to it. It is always possible however, if adequate genealogical data be available, to calculate the degree of inter-relatedness between the *bilek-familis* of a long-house, and to express this as a percentage. In the case of Rumah Nyala, for example, there are 183, out of a total of 300 possible relationships, giving a quotient oof 61%.[29]

(29) Table 24, is based on the equating of all ties within the range: sibling — 5th cousin. However, the same method can be applied for any degree of relationship. Thus, (*a*) if only *sibling* ties are considered, the quotient is 9.6%; (*b*) if only *first* cousin ties are considered, the quotient is 7.3%; and (*c*) if only *second cousin* ties are considered, the quotient is 17.3%. For the range: *sibling—second cousin*, the quotient is: 35%.

15: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1955 OC6 Iban OC6

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127. This figure of 61% is evidence of the marked extent to which kinship determines the association of *bilek-families* in a single long-house community. It demonstrates that cognatic kinship is a cardinal factor governing social alignment among the Iban. An appreciation of this point is essential to the understanding of Iban society. In contrast, one might take 25 contiguous houses in the street of a London suburb. It is unlikely that the degree of inter-relatedness of the families occupying these 25 houses would rise much above 2% or 3%, and in many streets it would probably fall to zero.

128. In Table 24, we are dealing with all the *bilek-families* of Rumah Nyala. Let us now direct our attention to the families responsible for the founding of this long-house. Mention has already been made of the way in which these founding families have been drawn together by the inter-marriage of their members. In particular, there are nine *bilek-families* (eight of them grouped together in about the centre of the long-houses), which form a very compact bloc of cognatic kin. These are *bileks* Nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 19, and 21. Among them there is complete, or 100% inter-relatedness. Moreover, all of the relationships are close, being, for the most part, between siblings, or first and second cousins. Each of the other 16 *bileks* of Rumah Nyala is related to one or more of this central bloc of nine families, and they constitute, therefore, a kind of core around which the rest of the long-house is grouped. They are, one might say, the centre of gravity of Rumah Nyala, for they are all founding families, and their senior men and women are the most influential in the long-house. Two of their members, Nyala and Kamba respectively, hold the important positions of *tuai rumah* and *tuai burong*. Similar compact blocs of cognatic kin are found in most Iban long-houses; almost always they occupy adjacent apartments, and are founding members of the community.

Linkage of Bilek-Families to Long-House Community.

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129. In discussing the history of Rumah Nyala, it was noted that whenever a *bilek-family* moves to a new area, it always seeks out a long-house containing kin of one or other of its members. But the relationship may be traced from either the *pun-bilek*, or an affine. Let us take the example of a *bilek-family* consisting of a married couple and their children. The husband and wife will possess different personal kindreds, although if the couple are themselves kin, there will be overlapping to some extent. In moving to a new area, a choice may be made from amongst any of those long-houses which happen to contain members of the kindred of either the husband or the wife. Sometimes, of course, a long-house will contain members from both kindreds, but in these cases one side or the other will usually be found to predominate. An indication of the way in which these various factors work out in practice may be obtained from the following analysis of the kinship affiliations of 24 of the *bilek-families* of Rumah Nyala.[30] For each *bilek-family* a careful count has been made of the nature and number of the ties relating the senior married couple to other kin, who are also members of Rumah Nyala. Then, by comparing the number of relationships scored by husband and wife, it has been possible to decide which of the two is the more important. Inasmuch as all the occupants of Rumah Nyala are members of the same tribe, they are all to some extent related, but in Table 25, that follows, only such relationships as fall within the fifth cousin range have been admitted; it is seldom that relationships are remembered, or recognized beyond this limit, except in the vaguest terms. Thus, when it is said that relationship is *exclusively* through one of the spouses of a family, it means that the other spouse has no relatives in the long-house, ranking as fifth cousin, or less.

TABLE 25. *Showing the Relationship of 24 Bilek-Families of Rumah Nyala, to the Rest of the Community.*

A. *Relationship exclusively through pun bilek.*		*Relationship exclusively through affine.*	
Males.	*Females.*	*Males.*	*Females.*
7	2	2	2
Totals: 9		4	
B. *Relationship predominantly through pun bilek.*		*Relationship predominantly through affine.*	
Males.	*Females.*	*Males.*	*Females.*
1	5	4	1
Totals: 6		5	

From this Table it will be seen that in the majority of cases (15, or 62% approx), the relationship is either exclusively (37%), or predominantly (25%) through the *pun bilek*, i.e. the senior natal member of the *bilek*. Males (8), and females (7), are about equally represented.

(30) On *bilek*, No. 15, which is a *bilek berakup*, has been omitted. Both Una and Madu, rank as *pun bilek*, and each is related about equally to the rest of the long-house.

15: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1955 OC6 Iban OC6

One factor tending to cause this preponderence is the process of partition, for it is usual for the two parts of a *bilek* to remain in the same long-house, after the division has taken place. However, relationships through affines also occur in many *bileks* (9, or 38% approx), and it is especially significant to note that in four cases, the relationship was *exclusively through an affine*.

130. Let us take one of these *bileks*—No. 10—as an example. This is the family of Nyala, the *tuai rumah*, and his wife, Sumbok, who is the *pun bilek*. (C.F.: Figure 3). Sumbok, formerly belonged to a long-house in the Sungai Mujong (the present Rumah Jarau), distant about 25 miles from Sungai Sut. When Nyala married Sumbok, he was living with his parents, Sikau and Bajik, whose *bilek* (No. 11) has now been inherited by Rimbor, Nyala's elder sister. Nyala left his parents, and took up residence in the *bilek* of his wife, Sumbok. There he remained for some years, but after the upheaval that followed the insurrections of 1915—1919, it was decided to join Pioh, who was about to found a new house in the Sungai Sut. Pioh, it will be noted from the genealogies, was Nyala's first cousin, and Nyala's sister, and several other first cousins were also members of the new community. At this time Nyala had already acquired considerable prestige. In a raid on the Bunut of the Upper Rejang, he had succeeded in taking a head; he was a survivor of the ambush at Nanga Pila (in which some 200 Iban were killed by a well-armed Government force), and he had taken part in several other skirmishes on the side of the rebels. He was an ambitious man, and judged that his prospects with Pioh, and other close relatives in the Sungai Sut, were better than at his wife's house in the Sungai Mujong. A decision having been reached, all of the property which Sumbok had inherited was moved to Pioh's house, and an apartment built next to that of Nyala's sister, Rimbor. Here, Sumbok and Nyala have remained ever since. Thus, although their *bilek* was inherited by Sumbok, and originally belonged to another long-house, it has been the kinship ties of Nyala, an affine, which have determined its present situation. Nyala's ambitions, it may be noted have been fulfilled, for on the death of Pioh, Nyala succeeded him as *tuai rumah*, and he has since become the generally accepted leader of the Iban of the Sut River. Similar cases in which the residential situation of a *bilek* has been determined by the kinship affiliations of an affine, are to be found in all Iban long-houses of any size, and often they form a considerable proportion of the total. In Rumah Nyala, the proportion was 38%, and this, it seems, is typical of most of the larger long-houses.

131. It is plain that we are here dealing with a most important feature of Iban social organization. An Iban *bilek-family* is an autonomous unit, but although, at any given time, it always belongs to one particular long-house community, the whereabouts of this long-house is finally a matter of choice. In other words, should its members so desire, a *bilek-family* can, at any time, move to another long-house. Certain ritual observances, presently to be explained, must always be made, but once these obligations have been fulfilled, a family is free to go whither it chooses. However, its field of choice is, in reality, severely limited. When a *bilek-family* moves to a new area, its principal motive, in the great majority of cases, is to gain access to fresh tracts of virgin forest. In former years, when there was little or no attempt on the part of Government to restrain the Iban advance into new territories, the possibilities were endless. *Bilek-families* from several different long-houses could join together and set off to establish a pioneer settlement almost anywhere on the fringe of the regions then occupied by their tribe. Vast areas of jungle were there for the taking, and the only hazard to be faced, was the danger of head-hunting attacks by alien tribes, such as the Kayans and Ukits. There is evidence that even in these aboriginal conditions, when access to new land was virtually unrestricted, closely inter-related kindreds were the pioneering groups. To-day, following the re-settlement of the Baleh under general Government control, and the setting up of boundaries (Forest paks) beyond which cultivation is not permitted, the situation has changed. Within the present boundaries there are still extensive enclaves of virgin jungle, but with few exceptions, they all fall within the territories of existing communities. This means that when a *bilek-family* wants to gain access to new land, it can only do so by attaching itself to an established community. But this introduces a further limitation, for there is little possibility of a *bilek-family* being accepted by a long-house to which it is a complete stranger, nor would its members want to live in such uncongenial surroundings. It becomes necessary therefore, to find a suitable long-house, in which other kinsfolk are already settled. These kin provide an avenue of entry, and with their help, incorporation is readily achieved. Again, kinsfolk can be relied upon to offer much needed assistance. When a family arrives to join another long-house, they usually stay with relatives, until they can build a *bilek* for themselves. (For example, when Abut and her family—*bilek* No. 23—arrived at Rumah Nyala in 1949, they took up temporary residence in the apartment of Abut's first cousin, Sinoh—*bilek* No. 4, and they were still there at the time of my departure in February, 1951, although they had built a separate farm-house in which most of their time was spent). Again, relatives will often agree to give a newly arrived family the temporary use of a piece of nearby secondary jungle (*damun*). In this way the first season's farming is made easy (otherwise the arduous task of felling virgin forest has to be faced), and they are able to devote their main energies to the building of a new apartment.

Principles of Long-House Organization: Summary.

132. As we have seen all the *bilek-families* which joined Rumah Nyala subsequent to its formation in 1922, were related in some way to persons who were already members of the community. This was also the case in all the other long-houses which I was able to investigate. A relationship there always is, but it may be with any resident, and this resident may be related to either spouse of the *bilek-family* concerned. In other words, a husband and wife never take up residence in a long-house unless one or the other has kinsfolk there. It does often happen, of course, that both spouses have close cognatic kin in the same long-house. Approximately half

621 612 592 of the *bilek-families* of Rumah Nyala fell into this category. The situation can be summed up by saying that the framework of Iban social organization at the level of the local community is *bilateral kinship*, and that a *bilek-family* is free to join any long-house containing cognatic kin of either husband or wife. This, it should be noted, is a different principle from that which operates within the *bilek-family* itself. A child is always a member of either its father's or its mother's natal *bilek*, depending on whether its parents practise virilocal or uxorilocal marriage; but it can never be a member of both their *bileks*, always one or the other. This means that *bilek* membership, inheritance, etc. is always through either a female or a male link, and it is this system that we have termed *ambilateral filiation*. Further, a child only leaves the *bilek* in which it has grown up, to be adopted, or to marry into some other family; we may say, therefore, that within the *bilek-family*, filiation is ambilateral and permanent—the only exceptions being adoption and marriage. The principles governing long-house organization are quite different however, and cannot be properly described as ambilateral. Instead they are based on bilateral kinship, and a recognition that cognatic ties, whether traced through mother or father, are of equal value. Either, or both, may determine the local community in which a *bilek-family* resides, and *bilek-families* are perfectly free to move from one long-house to another within any of the kindreds to which they belong.

621 166 133. Occasionally, because of quarrelling, bad omens, or persistently poor harvests, a long-house will break up, and its constituent *bilek-families* disperse to several different destinations. During the year 1949, two such cases occurred in the Sungai Sut, the houses concerned being Rumah Kubu (of 11 *bileks*), and Rumah Angkau (of 15 *bileks*). Listed below are the destinations to which their various *bilek-families* dispersed.

A. *Rumah Kubu, of Sungai Sut.*

Number of bileks.	*Destination.*
4	Rumah Sipang, Ulu Merirai,
2	Rumah Anye, Sungai Mujong,
2	Rumah Nyala, Sungai Sut,
1	Rumah Sumtong, Sungai Merirai,
1	Rumah Sebau, Nanga Baleh,
1	Rumah Ubong, Sungai Poi.

B. *Rumah Angkau, of Sungai Bena (a tributary of S. Sut).*

Number of bileks.	*Destination.*
6	Sungai Ensulai, below Kapit,
1	Sungai Merirai,
1	Sungai Menuan, below Kapit,
1	Rumah Unyong, Sungai Bena,
6	*remained at* Rumah Angkau, Sungai Bena.

In the case of Rumah Angkau, it will be noted that nine *bileks* (out of a total of 15) dispersed to four different destinations, leaving six families at the original site. Rumah Kubu presents an even more striking example however, for here the site (which had been occupied since about 1932), was entirely abandoned, and the 11 *bilek-families* dispersed to six widely scattered destinations. Sungai Poi is distant more than 100 river miles, from Rumah Sipang, a pioneer community in the head-waters of the Merirai. We are here confronted then, with the complete disintegration of a long-house community, its constituent *bilek-families* terminating their association, and separating to merge with other already established communities. Moreover, each *bilek-family* joined a community in which there were already kinsfolk of one of its members. This is further evidence of the remarkably wide area over which kindred ties ramify. But most importantly, these examples of community disintegration demonstrate with clarity, the fundamental nature of the Iban long-house community, showing that it is a free and conditional association of corporate family groups. In other words, being part of a long-house does not deprive a *bilek-family* of its essential autonomy. In Iban social organisation, there is no principle of more vital consequence.

The Long-House Community as Corporate Group.

621 134. From the analysis so far, we can say that a long-house community is a serial aggregation of *bilek-families*, confederated by cognatic kinship. Moreover, it is an open, and not a closed group, for *bilek-families* are entitled to leave and join at will (subject, of course, to Government regulations). To what extent then is the long-house community as a whole, a corporate group? This is a difficult question to answer in general terms, but it may be observed, from the outset, that the degree of corporateness is low, and that inasmuch as it does exist it stems from ritual concepts, rather than from collective ownership of land or property. Let us first deal with these two last categories.

621 311 423 135. Until fairly recent times, land in the Kapit District, has been a commodity in virtually unrestricted supply. When an Iban community had felled all the virgin jungle of the area in which it was living, it simply moved on to another territory, where there was fresh forest land to be exploited. Under these conditions land was not a highly valued commodity, for on all sides there lay vast tracts of unpeopled, primeval jungle, awaiting the onslaught of axe and fire. But with

the advent of Government control, the situation is changing, for the Iban are now hemmed in by boundaries beyond which slash and burn cultivation is not permitted. In the Baleh area however, a plentiful supply of land still exists, and there is, as yet, no real pressure upon the recently erected boundaries. The re-settlement of the Baleh in 1922 was under general Government surveillance, and each long-house community was allotted a roughly defined territory bordering the banks of the main river, or one of its tributaries. But the re-occupation was en masse, by scores of different long-house communities, and there was no system of survey, or legal registration. 621 311 423

136. Territories seem to have range from about five to fifteen square miles, according to the size of the community, and the most favourable sites, at the heads of the rivers, were granted to those who had remained faithful to the Brooke regime during the years of disaffection and rebellion. However, the allotment of a territory did not mean that the members of the community concerned held this land in collective, or communal ownership. What it did mean was that all *bilek-families* had *equal access* to the land. Among the Iban, ownership of land is established by the felling of primary jungle. Thereafter, the land belongs to the *bilek-family* responsible for this first felling, and it has full discretionary rights over the usufruct of the secondary jungle which springs up within a few months of the harvest. These rights are not in perpetuity however. Should a *bilek-family* migrate to another district and take up permanent residence there, its former land rights lapse; they may be assumed by remaining kindred, or if the entire community migrates, simply abandoned. 621 423 425

137. A pioneer community begins then, as a group having common and equal rights of access to a specified tract of virgin forest; year by year its component *bilek-families* establish ownership over different sections of this territory, until finally all of the land is privately owned. At the same time fruit-trees are being planted, and, in some areas, rubber plantations established; these too are privately owned by the *bilek-families* that plant and rear them. A long-house community consists therefore, of a series of *bilek-families* all of which hold in private ownership areas of secondary jungle, fruit trees, and sometimes, rubber plantations, within the confines of a compact territory. This much the *bilek-families* of a long-house do have in common, but farming land is never held in collective ownership.

138. Nor, among the Iban, is there anything resembling a village green (such as the *marae* of Polynesia), which belongs to the community as a whole. Privately owned land approaches to within a few feet of the long-house structure. The only exception is the burial ground, or *pendam*. This invariably consists of a spur rising from the river, on the banks of which the long-house is situated, for corpses are always carried by canoe. The jungle on the chosen spur is left in its primeval state, and never entered except for burials and on ritual occasions. Here, all *bilek-families* inter their dead, and throughout the undergrowth (for graves are left untended) are scattered jars, gongs, and many other kinds of burial property, which constitute the last inheritance of the dead. A burial ground falls into the same category as virgin jungle, over it there are no rights of ownership, but to it all *bilek-families* have full and equal rights of access. Occasionally it happens that two neighbouring long-houses share the same *pendam*, but in general, each community has its own site, where the bodies of those who once lived together lie buried. 621 423 764

139. We have seen that among the Iban the *bilek-family* is the basic land-owning group. This also applies to all other forms of property. Thus the long-house structure itself is made up of a series of separate apartments, each of which is privately owned. The only exception is the *tangga*—a huge log of hardwood, adzed to shape and deeply notched at regular intervals to form a ladder by way of which entry may be gained to the elevated *tanju* of the long-house. Often, they are about 20 feet in length, and weigh hundreds of pounds; sometimes, several *tangga*, connected by small stagings, are required. In the Baleh, *tangga* always lead on to the open *tanju*—either in the front of the house, or at the ends. They are spaced out at even intervals, and in most long-houses there is one entrance to about every seven *bilek*s. In Rumah Nyala, for example, with 22 actual apartments, there were three entrances (*c.f.* Figure 2), while Rumah Tungku, with 45 apartments, had eight, and Rumah Sibat, with 29 apartments, four entrances. 621 423 342 417

140. The making of a *tangga*, transporting it back to the long-house, and then erecting it, complete with railings, is no light task. Usually it is undertaken by the men of the small group of *bilek-families*, whose regular way of entry it will become. But if it be the main *tangga* of the long-house (i.e. the first entrance to be constructed by the founding families), all the men of the long-house join in the work. This is mainly for ritual reasons. The main *tangga* is looked upon as a kind of portal connecting the long-house with the outside world; by this route both good and evil may come to the inhabitants, but by proper ritual performances, it is possible, say the Iban, to consecrate the *tangga* so that it will become a ladder by way of which riches and good fortune are carried up into their house. Understandably, all *bilek-families* are eager to join in the ceremony, and enjoy the benefits it brings. In the full scale rites, various of the gods (*petara*) are summoned, in a chanted invocation (*timang*), to visit the long-house, and on their arrival, offerings are made and sacrifices performed. In the *timang* the attributes and the actions of the gods are described. With them they have brought a marvellous *tangga*, which has the power to attract to the long-house all that men desire. It cannot be seen, of course, for it is in the form of soul-stuff, but as the gods erect it, the Iban put their newly hewn *tangga* in place, and the substances of the two become magically fused. Further offerings and sacrifices are made, prayers of consecration uttered, and the ceremony is concluded. Such a *gawai tangga* is usually organized by the *tuai burong* (augur), but the materials used in the offerings (e.g. *tuak*, eggs, rice, etc.) are supplied in equal proportions by all the *bilek-families* of the long-house. It is thus a corporate rite, involving the whole community, and the *tangga* is the common property of all those who participated. 621 423 746 417

621 423 356 141. A *tangga*, such as this, is the only object which can be properly regarded as belonging to the long-house as a whole. This was a topic which I frequently discussed with the Iban, asking them if there was any other kind of property which could be regarded as belonging to the long-house as a whole, and which had resulted from the co-operation of all its members. Always the answer was the same: only the main *tangga* fell into this category, and my own observations brought me to the same conclusion. After a *tangga* has been erected, its upkeep becomes a general duty, but within a few years, the rites which accompanied its erection fade in the memory, and responsibilities are neglected or evaded. At Rumah Nyala, the main *tangga* provided me with an excellent opportunity to observe Iban responses to corporate obligations. On several occasions it fell into serious disrepair. The usual trouble was the collapse of the side railings, making the slippery, notched log that remained, dangerous for young children. A few days after this had happened, Nyala, the *tuai rumah*, would parade up and down the long-house, announcing the damage obvious to all, and striving to round up a group of helpers. But his exhortations never met with any sort of general response; sometimes one or two unoccupied men would offer their assistance, but more often things would drag on for several days, until Nyala himself would gather the necessary *rotan* lashings, and make good the damage with his own hands.

Co-operation in Economic Affairs.

621 476 241 142. The Iban economic system is based on the cultivation of hill *padi*, but here again, there is never co-operation involving the whole community. Each *bilek-family* is self-sufficient economically, managing its own farm as an independent unit. Between small groups of *bilek-families*—especially in felling, dibbling, sowing and weeding—co-operation is customary, but rules of exact reciprocity are very strictly adhered to by all participants. It is, in fact, a system of labour exchange. There is only one phase of the agricultural cycle that is likely to concern the whole long-house: the firing of the farms. If farms adjoin one another, no one of them may be fired until a general conference (*baum*) has been held. This is to avert the danger of fire spreading without warning, and possibly leading to loss of life, or serious ritual offences like the burning of another family's *batu umai* (*whet-stone*). With this one exception, farms are freely managed as individual family ventures.

621 476 224 226 [278] 143. Hunting and fishing rights, which are very loosely defined, extend over the whole of the long-house territory, and occasional excursions into the territories of neighbouring communities are not objected to under Iban custom. In small long-houses, large animals, such as deer and pigs, are usually shared among all *bilek-families*, but here again, the principle is one of reciprocity, and all catches are expected to be shared out in the same way. In larger long-houses, the reciprocal groups is usually limited to about half-a-dozen neighbouring *biliks* of closely related kin. Brief mention may also be made of *tuba* fishing, which involves the co-operation of a large number of *bilek-families*. The method followed is to construct a dam (*impang*) across a slow flowing part of a river—a task in which all the men join; then all those participating—men, women and children—foregather at a chosen spot a mile or two upstream, each *bilek-family* bringing a bundle of *tuba* (Derris alleptica) roots. After the necessary rituals have been performed, the roots are pounded up, and their poisonous juices gathered in canoes which have been half filled with water. This done, the milky fluid that results is all at once emptied into the river, and after an interval of about ten minutes, the whole party paddles off helter-skelter to net and spear the stunned and poisoned fish. Sometimes the whole community will join in the fishing, but participation is in no sense obligatory, and on most occasions it is usual to find persons from neighbouring long-houses also present. Moreover, although all *bilek-families* co-operate in providing the large quantity of *tuba* roots that is needed, there is, once the actual fishing begins, completely open and untrammelled competition. During *tuba* fishing, say the Iban, kinship ties are forgotten. Each *bilek*-family retains the fish which its members succeed in taking, and there is absolutely no attempt to divide up the total catch in equal proportions.

621 423 144. We may say then, that with the not very important exception of the *tangga*, the Iban long-house community holds no property in common ownership, nor is there any collective ownership of land. Again, in the economic sphere there is an absence of any kind of productive activity by the long-house as a whole.

The Position of Tuai Rumah.

622 [583] [671] 145. In every Iban long-house there are two offices of great importance—one secular and the other ritual. They are the positions of *tuai rumah* and *tuai burong*. In most long-houses they are held by different individuals, but it is perfectly permissible for one man to hold both offices, and in some communities this does happen. Neither position is ever held by a woman. (*c.f.* Footnote No. 22). When used as an adjective, the word *tuai* means old, or mature, but as a noun it refers to any senior and influential member of a community. Here, the emphasis is not primarily on age, but on the personal qualities of the individual concerned. Thus, a party of young men setting off on an expedition (*bejalai*), to gather jungle produce, always has its leader, or *tuai*, though he may be no more than in his early twenties. And in long-house communities, able, though only middle-aged men often come to exert very considerable authority and influence. In all contemporary long-houses however, there is one man who holds the title of *tuai rumah*, or house headman.

146. Since the pacification of the Iban and the establishment of European government, the position of *tuai rumah* has undergone several important changes. To-day, a *tuai rumah* is looked upon as an intermediary between his long-house and the administrative system. The Government accepts him as the representative of his community, and often he is made responsible for the implementing of its policies. Again, he has been empowered to settle disputes within the jurisdiction of his own long-house. (In the Third Division, "a *tuai rumah* may investigate but shall not try any case the maximum penalty for which exceeds six *mungkuls* under penalty of a fine of one pikul all to Government").(31) This means that the ultimate sanction of a *tuai rumah's*

(31) "Sea Dayak (Iban) Fines, Third Division," Kuching, 1940.

15: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1955 OC6 Iban OC6

legal authority is the power vested in him by Government. This, as we shall see, is a complete innovation, for in former times there was, among the Iban, no form of centralized political authority. A tribe then consisted of an endogamous cluster of kindreds, organized on the basis of cognatic kinship. Within a tribe there were always influential leaders, called *orang kaya*, later, under the Brooke régime, to be elevated to the status of *penghulu*, but such authority as they did possess was very limited. When disputes arose they could only be settled through the mechanism of the kinship system—each side being represented by certain of its influential members. A well established *adat* (customary law) helped to facilitate this process, and there was frequent recourse to ritual sanctions, as in diving contests, cock-fighting and ordeal by boiling water. But if agreement could not be reached, either the situation had to be accepted as unsettled, or one of the parties to the dispute could use force. This last solution, which usually took the form of a forced appropriation of property (*sperampas*) was sometimes resorted to if one party was much larger and stronger than the other. Between tribes whose members were not linked by ties of kinship there was no mechanism for dealing with disputes, and in these cases a state of feud (with head-hunting) was endemic.

147. In former times then, the position of *tuai rumah* was very much less important than it is to-day, and moreover, despite the changes which have occurred, his authority, within the long-house, is still very circumscribed. In Iban society, based as it is on the *bilek-family* and cognatic kinship, there are no large scale unilineal kin groups, such as lineages or clans, and this fact, in itself, precludes the possibility of there being any kind of highly developed leadership, or chief-tainship. Where there are no large scale corporate groups, the authority system must, of necessity, be rudimentary in character.

148. The office of *tuai rumah* is not an hereditary one. From the analysis presented earlier in this report, it will be remembered that any form of strict unilineal inheritance—whether through males or females—is alien to Iban society; and although the office of *tuai rumah* may be held only by men, there is no dogma of automatic patrilineal succession. When a *tuai rumah* dies, his successor is chosen by the long-house community as a whole. There is, of course, no system of voting; instead, a general meeting (*baum*) is held, at which all—women as well as men—express their opinions. Kinship affiliations are the main determining factor. The core-group of intimately related, founding *bilek-families* are always able to exert the most influence, and it is always one of their members that is chosen. Descent does therefore play a very important part, for it is only by descent (or adoption) that membership of this core-group can be established. But any kind of close cognatic relationship is sufficient. In other words, kinship ties do not automatically designate a successor, but rather only delimit the field from which he is chosen. Other factors are always taken into account; for example, a man's personal qualities. Ideally *a tuai rumah* is a man of good appearance and address, who has attained prestige without sacrificing popularity. Again he should have those qualities of self-reliance and resolution which are the pre-requisites of any leader. But, perhaps most important of all are a sound knowledge of *adat*, impartiality, good powers of judgment in handling disputes, and an ability to use words. As the second Rajah observed, the Iban "have a great admiration for a man who talks fluently and well."[32] This ability is usually described in the phrase: *nemu jako* (*literally to* "know words"), which is used to refer to one with a comprehensive grasp of traditions and custom, who is able to argue a case with persuasiveness and conviction. As the Iban put it: "Whoever 'knows words' is taken by people to become their leader," (*"Sapa nemu jako ngambi orang nyadi tuai"*).

149. Any cognate possessing these qualities may become a *tuai rumah*. It is not required that he be living as a member of his natal *bilek-family*. Of twenty *tuai rumah* appearing in my genealogies, twelve were living in their natal *bileks*, (i.e. virilocal marriage), while eight were men who had taken up uxorilocal residence. Some indication of the range of relationship within which succession may occur is given in Table 26, which gives detailed information for six *tuai rumah*, of the Baleh area, all of whom I knew intimately.

TABLE 26. SUCCESSION TO POSITION OF TUAI RUMAH.

Name of tuai rumah	*Location of longhouse*	*Relationship of previous holder of office*	*Bilek of which previous holder was a member*	*Type of marriage of present tuai rumah*
Nyala	S. Sut	Father's sister's son	Different *bilek*	Uxorilocal
Kubu	S. Sut	Adoptive father's brother-in-law's son	Different *bilek*	Virilocal
Igoh	S. Majau	Father	Same *bilek*	Virilocal
Merapoh ...	S. Melinau	Wife's mother's father	Same *bilek*	Uxorilocal
Banggau ...	S. Melinau	Mother's mother's brother's son	Different *bilek*	Virilocal
Tungku ...	S. Tiau	Mother's brother	Different *bilek*	Virilocal

(32) Charles Brooke, "Ten Years in Sarawak," vol. 1, pp. 368—9.

622 In only one of these six cases (i.e. Igoh) has there been true agnatic succession; in the other five, a cognate has succeeded, and in one instance through an affinal link. The greatest range in relationship is three generations. In four long-houses, however, the successor is of a different *bilek-family* from that of his predecessor, though a member of the same core-group of founding families. All of these features, it will be observed, are entirely consistent with the general principles of Iban social structure.

622 150. When a man does become a *tuai rumah* there is no kind of initiation ceremony, nor
557 is he given any kind of honorific title. His kindred continue to use the ordinary terms of classificatory kinship (*anak, menyadi, apai*, etc.), while strangers address him as *wai* (friend), or with his personal name (e.g. Nyala). Towards him there are no special attitudes of deference or respect, other than he is able to command by virtue of his own personal prowess and prestige. He receives no tribute of any kind, and is entitled to no special privileges — except in his relations with Government officials. Unless he also is a *tuai burong*, he has no religious duties to perform, and no sort of ritual sanctity attaches to his person or the apartment he occupies. It frequently happens, of course, that a *tuai rumah* is also a man of considerable personal prestige. He may, for example, be a successful head-hunter, and have sealed his renown by performing a number of the great rituals (*gawai*), which rank so high in Iban estimation. Again, being a *tuai rumah* does mean that a man becomes widely known, for it is usual for an Iban community to be called after its *tuai rumah* (e.g. Rumah Nyala, etc.), and this is undoubtedly one of the main attractions which the office has for ambitious individuals. A *tuai rumah* is also presented with special opportunities for meeting Europeans, and, in Iban eyes, such meetings are likely to lead to all manner of desirable results. But here, we are primarily concerned with the jural status of a *tuai rumah* within his own long-house. Under Iban *adat* a *tuai rumah* has no authority to command other members of the community, nor are they, in any real sense, his subordinates. Were a *tuai rumah* so rash as to issue commands to others, he would at once be rebuffed, and sharply. Rather, such influence as he does exert is by a subtle mixture of persuasion and admonition, for he knows that his position is dependent on the continued goodwill and approval of his *anembiak*, as the other members of the house are called. In many ways his role is an unenviable one. I remember *tuai rumah* Nyala, remarking to me with some feeling that he only ever gave his opinion when it was asked for; he would be *malu* (ashamed), he said, to volunteer advice to any of his *anembiak*, and, in any case, no-one would ever listen to him if he did.

622 151. Howell, in one of his early articles in the "Sarawak Gazette",[33] has summed up the
557 situation of the *tuai rumah* in these words: "If he be partial in his dealings or judgments in executing his jurisdiction within his village (i.e. long-house), he forfeits his fame, and his followers leave him gradually. If a chief[34] cease to have followers, he ceases to govern a village". This statement correctly describes the nature of a *tuai rumah's* authority: it is based on popular acceptance and approval, which is withdrawn at the first sign of serious partiality or injustice. Under Iban *adat*, it is possible for a *tuai rumah*, whose behaviour meets with general disapproval, to be removed from office, and for another man to be chosen in his place. Deposition is achieved simply by a transference of recognition. I remember enquiring of the Iban what would happen if a *tuai rumah* refused to be rejected. Their scornful comment on this contingency sums up the general attitude to a *tuai rumah's* authority with great nicety: "Wherein would lie his power, he belongs to but one *bilek-family*;" ("*Dini iya depat, ke pintu aju*").

The Jural Role of the Tuai Rumah.

622 152. This brings us to the true nature of a *tuai rumah's* role. Although his authority in
671 political, economic and ritual matters is so limited, he does have one very important function: he is, within his community, the custodian of *adat*, its juridicial warden and principal arbiter. Among the Iban customary law is highly developed, and, even although it has not yet been fully recorded in writing,[35] it is, nonetheless, highly codified. Howell remarks of the Iban: "with them, all offences are fineable,"[36] and they are, indeed, a most litigious people. But if lawsuits are to be prosecuted, some sort of legal institution is essential, and it is here that the *tuai rumah* comes in. The main duty of a *tuai rumah*, in Iban eyes, is to watch over conduct, and to safeguard, and administer the customary law (*ngimpun chara, ngimpun adat*).

622 153. In the case of a private delict, the procedure is as follows: the plaintiff approaches the
195 *tuai rumah*, either privately or in the presence of witnesses, lays his complaint (*pedawa*), and
673 demands that the case be heard. It then falls to the *tuai rumah* to consult the other party or parties. Sometimes he is able to effect a summary settlement, but if this is not possible, he must then arrange the time and place of a formal hearing. Usually the chosen site is the neutral *ruai* of the *tuai rumah* himself. Proceedings are always in public, being attended by both parties to

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(33) *Sarawak Gazette*, 1898, p. 155.

(34) There is, in my opinion, no justification for describing a *tuai rumah* as a *chief*, though this is often done in accounts of Iban life. The term 'chief' — as generally used in anthropological analysis — refers to a status far removed from that of an Iban *tuai rumah*. Polynesian chieftainship may be taken as an example. In Polynesia, a chief is the titled head of a unilineal descent group, and, in many cases, he traces his descent from the gods. As such, he possesses chiefly *mana*, and is hedged about by *tapu*, and attitudes of extreme respect and deference. He is addressed in honorific language, receives tribute, and in his person are vested great powers and many privileges. As we have seen, an Iban *tuai rumah* possesses none of these attributes, for, as is only to be expected, in a classless and egalitarian society, without unilineal descent groups, political authority is very rudimentary in its character. To call a *tuai rumah* a 'chief' is only to invite misunderstanding of his true status.

(35) Following a meeting held in Sibu in 1936, an official list of 'Iban fines' — for the Third Division, was issued under the authority of His Highness the Rajah. This list, however, although it does cover all major delicts, cannot be regarded as exhaustive. (ref.: "Sea Dayak (Iban) Fines, Third Division," Kuching, 1940).

(36) *Sarawak Gazette*," 1898, p. 121.

the disputs, their kin, and anyone else interested. Normally it is the *tuai rumah* himself who presides over the hearing, but always with the assistance of one or more of the other elders (*tuai*) of the community. During my stay among the Iban I attended scores of different *pechara*, but not once did I encounter the hearing of a case by a solitary *tuai rumah*. In other words, there is always a panel of arbiters, or judges, of which the *tuai rumah* is usually the head. However, a *tuai rumah* rarely, if ever, participates in a case that involves any other members of his *bilek-family*, or any of his close relatives. This is to avoid the charges of partiality, which a community levels at its *tuai rumah* on the slightest of pretexts. Again, a *tuai rumah* will often decline to participate in the hearing of a case for other reasons, but he must then arrange for other senior men of the house to take his place. There were in Rumah Nyala, for example, five other men who regularly acted as arbiters, namely: Kubu (50 years), Kamba (45 years), Adia (43 years), Ubong (40 years), and Kana (38 years). These, it will be noted, were far from being the oldest men in the long-house, but they were all capable talkers whose powers of judgment and command of *adat* were widely acknowledged. Similar men are to be found in every Iban community.

154. Iban legal procedure is the reverse of formal, and even the most revered of *tuai rumah* is able to exert little control over the disputants. The hearing of a case is accepted as an occasion for the public expression of grievance and annoyance, and very often as many as six or seven persons—both judged and judging—will join in simultaneous vociferation for protracted periods. But, in course of time, feelings are assuaged or exhausted, and the panel of arbiters come to their decision. If their judgement be accepted, the fine is handed over to the *tuai rumah* for division. In the case of serious delicts, a fixed proportion of the fine must be paid to Government, otherwise it is handed over to the plaintiff, but only after the fees of the panel of arbiters have been deducted. These fees (*lantan*) vary from case to case; but they may comprise anything from 10% to 50% of the total fine. However this seldom amounts to more than about $1 for each man involved, and frequently (when there are a number of arbiters) individual shares fall well below this figure. The various *lantan* paid to a *tuai rumah*, are the only kind of recompense which he receives in reward for his services.

155. In the event of a public delict occurring (e.g. incest, etc.) a *tuai rumah* is expected to take action on behalf of the community, and he is usually joined in this by the *tuai burong*, whose concern is with the ritual state of the long-house. Again, it is the recognized duty of a *tuai rumah* to intervene to stop serious quarrelling, and to prevent actions that threaten the general welfare. In jural matters therefore, the long-house community is a corporate group, for the various *bilek-families*, of which it is composed, do place themselves under the jurisdiction of one *tuai rumah*, whose duty it is to administer and to safeguard the customary law.

The Position of Tuai Burong.

156. This brings us to a closely related topic: the long-house as a ritual entity. Iban religious life is a vast and abstruse subject, of which only a most cursory account can be given in this report,[37] but of certain of its aspects brief mention must be made, for it is in ritual terms that the long-house community attains its real unity. The ritual head of the long-house is not the *tuai rumah*, but the *tuai burong*. As already noted, it does sometimes happen that one man holds both offices, but in the great majority of houses, the two positions are separate. During the years that have elapsed since the arrival of British administrators (about 80-90 years, in the case of the Baleh Iban) the role of the *tuai rumah* has widened considerably in scope, but in Iban eyes the office of *tuai burong* is still, in its way, just as important. The *tuai burong*, because he is solely concerned with ritual affairs, receives no cognizance from Government, but within the long-house, things are very different for, to the Iban, ritual beliefs and observances are a matter of supreme importance. The title *tuai burong* (which has the literal meaning of 'bird elder') I propose to translate as: '*augur*.' As this suggests, a *tuai burong* is chiefly concerned with the taking of bird omens, and he does this on behalf of the whole community.

The Iban System of Augury.

157. The Iban system of augury is a highly specialized manifestation of their general magico-religious beliefs, and it can only be understood in this comprehensive context. Here however, we must be content with a fragmentary summary. For the Iban there are scores of different creatures—animals, birds, reptiles and insects—whose behaviour may, in certain circumstances, be fraught with meaning. But the over-ruling concept is not that these creatures are significant in themselves, but rather that they are representatives, or messengers of supernatural beings. These supernatural beings may be either spirits (*antu*), or gods (*petara*), and it is believed that certain of them do commonly appear to man in animal form. However it is from seven specific birds that auguries are mainly taken, and it is to these that we must now direct out attention. Their names are:[38]

Iban name	*Scientific name*	*English name*
ketupong	Sasia abnormis (Temm.)	Rufous Piculet
membuas	Lacedo pulchella (Horsf.)	Banded Kingfisher
beragai	Harpactes duvauceli (Temm.)	Scarlet-rumped Trogon
papau	Harpactes diardi (Temm.)	Diard's Trogon
bejampong	Platylophus galericulatus (Cuv).	Crested Malay Jay
pangkas	Blythipicus rubiginosus (Swains.)	Maroon Woodpecker
nendak	Copsychus malabaricus (Scop.)	White-rumped Shama

(37) I hope to be able to give a full and detailed account of Iban magic and religion, in subsequent monographs and papers.

(38) I am indebted to B. E. Smythies, Esq. for these identifications.

825 158. Each of these seven species is the incarnation in bird form of a supernatural being—
776 known by the same name. In their form as gods they are cardinal figures in Iban invocations (*timang*) and sagas (*ensera*), and they are believed to attend all of the more important Iban rituals (gawai). Like most Iban gods they are anthropomorphic, and they occasionally appear to the Iban (in their dreams) in human shape. Five of them: Ketupong, Membuas, Beragai, Papau and Bejampong, are married to the daughters of the high god Lang Singalang Burong (whose special concern is with warfare and head-hunting), and this, in itself, is a clear indication of their importance. Again, each of them has parents, and grandparents, all named, who are important figures in the Iban pantheon. For example, Apai Membuas (the father of Membuas), whose full name is: Bujang Bungah Jajingah Tinggi Serukong, lives beneath the immense buttresses of a mythical *plai* tree (Alstonia ochalanis); his special task is the safe-guarding of *bedilang* (the hearth stones over which enemy heads are placed), and the manufacture of the *rotan* casings (*ringka*) in which the heads are secured, and the circular framework (*bengkong*) from which they are suspended. In certain head-hunting rituals Apai Membuas is invoked, and brings these objects (*bedilang*, *ringka*, and *bengkong*) to the *gawai*.

776 159. Each of the seven supernatural beings we are discussing has the power to become in-
825 carnate as one particular bird. These incarnations never vary; thus, Membuas always takes the shape of a Banded Kingfisher. When any one of the seven birds is seen or heard by an Iban, this is believed to be a pronouncement by the gods, either commending, or cautioning against, a pro-
787 posed course of action. Everything then depends on interpreting the prognostication aright, and assenting to it with zeal. Many details must be taken into account: the precise movements of the bird, the type of cry it uttered, and the exact time and place of the event. Each bird is regarded as having a special character of its own, and to be associated with varying kinds of activity. Furthermore when two birds of different species are encountered in close succession (as often happens), it is their joint meaning which must then be taken into reckoning. Because of all these variable factors, the whole system is exceedingly complex, and to become an expert augur a man must go through many years of diligent and patient apprenticeship.

160. It is important to realize that for the Iban their augury system has a divine sanction, and further that its whole intention is to guide and help, not to hinder and harm. Misfortune is not caused by omens of evil, but by man's failure to heed their warnings, by his wilful disregard of the prognostications of the gods. As the Iban themselves put it: "These omen birds, they announce to us those things which are hurtful and those which are not; but if we do not understand their language, if we do not heed them, then we shall suffer;" ("*Sida burong tu, bisi madah ka utai pemedis, utai enda; tang enti kitai enda nemu jako padah sida, enti enda beluli sida, nya kitai ka pedis*"). Cases do occur, of course, of persons failing to heed an omen—be it from inadvertence or perversity; every Iban can recall such happenings, and tell of the misfortunes that ensued. Indeed, accomplished augurs place great emphasis on precedent in arriving at their conclusions.

787 161. In the normal course of events omen birds are encountered fortuitously as men and
825 women go about their ordinary daily tasks, but, should the occasion demand it, they may be either deliberately sought or deliberately avoided. To take the last happening first; whenever a group of Iban are engaged on any undertaking of consequence (e.g. moving to a new house, fetching a
781 bride, erecting a new apartment, performing *padi* rituals, etc.), they take great care to see that certain of their number—usually two or three girls—are equipped with brass gongs, which are beaten without cease until the business in hand is concluded. Whether from a party trailing through the jungle, or a canoe gliding down one of the fast-flowing rivers, the throb of gongs is a familiar sound in Iban country. Its purpose is to forestall any possibility of an accidently encountered omen bird causing the entire venture to be abandoned. Such behaviour may seem flagrantly inconsistent, but in such cases it is usual for at least one auspicious omen to have been obtained in advance, and always, for a series of propitiatory offerings to have been presented to the gods. The attitude is rather that of a man, who having taken good counsel, and every possible safeguard, decides—for better or for worse—to shut his ears to all further admonition. As this suggests, an Iban's attitude towards his gods is far from passive, rather he is constantly concerned with the ritual manipulation of magical and supernatural forces, so that they will combine to his advantage.

787 162. No venture of importance may be embarked upon until a favourable augury has been secured. This involves the deliberate seeking of one or more of the seven omen birds. The augur sets off, usually alone and at daybreak, and wanders in a chosen tract of jungle. As soon as he hears or sees the bird he is seeking, he cuts a nearby sapling, at the same time uttering a few dedicatory words. This sapling (*kayu burong*, or *paong burong*) then becomes a token of the auspicious prognostication, and as such is used in subsequent rituals. It is rather as though the voice of the bird has been captured, and its potency for good stored within the cut sapling. A *kayu burong*, or omen-stick, is thus regarded as a kind of talisman, and if the occasion be a momentous one, it is preserved with the greatest of care for many years. If the augur encounters unfavourable omens, the projected venture is temporarily postponed; and after a few days he tries again. An auspicious omen is usually obtained in due course, but if the auguries are persistently bad, the proposed undertaking must be permanently abandoned.

The Founding of a New Long-House.

621 163. Any man may seek omens (*beburong*) on his own account or for his *bilek-family*,
787 this is a private matter and need concern no-one else. It is the *tuai burong* however, who holds the very important position of augur to the long-house community as a whole, and who is responsible for safeguarding its ritual welfare. Perhaps his importance may best be illustrated by a
342 brief description of the ceremonies which mark the founding of a new long-house. In Iban eyes
796 these ceremonies are of immense consequence, for the future good fortune of the whole com-

munity is largely dependent upon their efficacy. It is the *tuai burong* who is in charge throughout. First, he determines, by the taking of auguries, if the proposed site is auspicious; then, when the moon is waxing, he gathers *kayu burong* for the ritual clearing of this site. The omen bird sought on all of these occasions is the *nendak*, whose cry is invariably 'cool' and propitious. Armed with some ten *nendak* omen-sticks, and accompanied by a band of women, clad in their ikat skirts, and beating gongs, the *tuai burong* leads the whole community to the selected site (*tuboh*). At its centre, where the first supporting post is to be erected, an offering (*piring*) is presented; then five men and five women, with the *nendak* omen-sticks held horizontally before them like staffs, parade up and down the site, brushing through the undergrowth. The purpose of this rite (called *ngerembang*) is to rid the site of all evil influences. This done, the actual clearing of the jungle begins. The next major event is the erecting of the first supporting post (*tiang bumbong*) of the new house. Once more, the *tuai burong* must first procure a *nendak* augury. Again, most *tuai burong*-possess bundles of charms, known as *perachelap rumah*, which are believed to ensure that a long-house is kept in a ritually 'cool' and benign state; these too are taken to the ceremony. Into the hole, which has been dug in advance, an offering (*piring*) is cast, together with a river stone (to make the house 'cool'), the blood of a sacrificial cock, and fluid in which the *tuai burong's* charms have been rinsed. Prayers and invocations are uttered, and then, the post, tied about with further offerings and ritual objects is hauled up into position. This first post is usually that of the *tuai burong's* apartment, and the tuai burong is regarded as the *pun rumah*, or founder of the long-house. Similar rites are performed for the main posts of all the other apartments, and the arduous work of erecting them is shared by all the men of the community. However, as soon as the main posts have been set in place, each *bilek-family* operates as an independent unit. During the building there are many ritual prohibitions (*pemali*) to be observed, and the *tuai burong's* duty it is, to see that they are not transgressed.

164. Finally there comes the culminating ritual of first entry. When all the *bilek-families* have assembled on the river bank below the new long-house, the *tuai burong* presents to each of them three *nendak* omen-sticks, gathered by him earlier on the same morning. These three omen-sticks are later carried up into the long-house and used to consecrate all of the new apartments; one is fastened to the wall of each *bilek*, another over the cooking hearth (*dapur*), and the third to the central post of each *ruai*. Other omen-sticks are planted beside the path leading up to the long-house, and at the foot of the *tangga*, or entry ladder. The *tuai burong*, carrying his omen-sticks and charms, is the first to climb, but before he does so, there are further vitally important acts to be performed. Beside the *tangga* a number of cleft sticks have been erected. Each *bilek-family* has prepared its own supply of *asi pulut* (a kind of glutinous rice, cooked in sections of green bamboo). Just before entry, each person eats a little of this rice to mark a point of ritual abruption from the past, and the bamboo container (*lumpang*) is left in one of the cleft sticks, to symbolize the leaving behind of all things that are evil. Each person also carries a small river stone (symbolical of a benign state of health) which is deposited at the base of the *tangga*, with an offering to the gods consisting of an egg. Then, immediately before setting foot on the *tangga*, each person treads on a large river boulder—a magical rite, bestowing the longevity of which the stone itself is a symbol. On entering the house, the whole community gathers on the *ruai* of the *tuai burong*, where a full-scale offering (*piring-lapan*) is laid out by several of the older women. When the offering has been performed, the *tuai burong* takes a cock, and waving it in benediction over the heads of the throng recites a prayer of consecration. The cock is then sacrificed, and some of its blood smeared on the foreheads of all the men, women and children making up the community. This achieved, the members of each *bilek-family* partake once more of a little rice, and this marks the termination of the rites. On the evening of the same day, each *bilek-family* performs a series of further offerings and sacrifices, to consecrate their separate apartments, and under the general supervision of the *tuai burong*, the various prohibitions (*pemali*) which have been in force during the construction of the house are brought to an end (*jadi mah*). During the next three days, no person may leave the immediate precincts of the long-house, lest by encountering a bad augury he jeopardize the laboriously contrived state of ritual concord of the new community.

165. This account of the inauguration of a long-house has been much abbreviated, but it does provide sufficient evidence to show that an Iban community is ritually a corporate entity. This is certainly the opinion of the Iban themselves, and it finds expression in an emphatic conviction that the behaviour of any one of the component *bilek-families* of a community can exert a baneful influence on the entire long-house. As we have seen, immense care is taken to ensure that the various *bilek-families* begin their association propitiously, and thereafter, it is the duty of the *tuai burong* to do all in his power to preserve this salutary state of affairs.

166. When the Iban speak of the ritual condition of a long-house they liken it to the temper of a human organism. When in sound and normal health, a man's body is said to be *chelap*, or cool, and when it is afflicted by disease or disorder, *angat*, or feverish. These same terms are applied to the long-house. Ritually, it may be in a 'cool' and benign state (*rumah chelap*), or, what is greatly feared, it may become 'heated' (*rumah angat*), charged with a kind of evil and contagious essence that threatens all of its inhabitants. The danger is not physical but spiritual—though to an Iban mind, physical and spiritual events are but different aspects of the same continuum—and its agency is mystical. This dreaded state of affairs—*rumah angat*—is liable to be brought about by any serious transgression of a ritual prohibition (*pemali*); but the danger can be averted by the paying of an expiatory fine to the *tuai burong*. Such a fine—if the breach be a grave one—always includes a fowl (or a pig) which is sacrificed, to exculpate the transgressor, and free the community from any threat to its well-being. Moreover, these ritual payments must be prompt, for should any misfortune (and especially death) befall one of the other *bilek-families* before amends have been made, the transgressor is then held responsible, and under Iban *adat*, may be heavily fined. A long-house may also become *angat* from an invasion of malevolent

spirits. This is made known in dreams, and should there have been a series of unwarranted deaths, a community will often flee their long-house, and stay away for months, while waiting for it to become 'cool' again. One of the strangest sights which the hinterland of Sarawak has to offer is an Iban long-house, whose inhabitants have fled in terror of 'unseen monsters.' Hung about with esoteric emblems and charms—an unavailing barricade of protective magic these—and strewn with a medly of abandoned possessions, the house stands aloof, silent and deserted, as though its owners had indeed been suddenly spirited away.

167. The rites which accompany its construction, and those of the ceremony of first entry are all aimed at producing a long-house in which men, their wives and children, can live in ritual security and safe keeping amid the known perils of their world. Sometimes (even more elaborate rites are staged. The most important of these is the *pawai engkune*, in which all *bilek-families* join. It is commonly held a few weeks after first occupation of the new house. A temporary shrine (*ranyai*), containing offerings, omen-sticks, charms and pieces of wood termed *engkune*, is erected on the *ruai* of the *tuai burong*. For one whole night, a party of four men skilled in the task, encircle the spot, chanting an invocation (*timang*) to the gods. In magical and poetic words, they describe the arrival of the gods, who, at the behest of the Iban, build for them a wonderful new house. Especially prominent is Apai Nendak (the father of the omen bird, Nendak), who brings most of the materials for this house built by the gods, and furnishes it with charms potent against all manner of evils. The gods, it is believed, enter the shrine charging the objects stored there with supernatural power, and to conclude the ritual, the shrine is dismantled, and its contents shared out by the *tuai burong*, among all the *bilek-families* of the long-house. To a representative of each, he hands an omen-stick from the shrine, uttering a prayer (*sampi*) as he does so:

> "May these hallowed omen-sticks, which I now share out, protect and guard our long-house, so that free from all harm, from all sickness and disorder, we may dwell in coolness and in shade, in happiness and health—forever!"

Also shared out for preservation are pieces of wood from the shrine, for these are symbolical of the materials used by the gods in their miraculous building, which is thought of as being mystically fused with the very timbers of the Iban's own house.

168. For the maintenance of the ritual well-being of a long-house, all of its *bilek-families* are responsible. This is well illustrated by what happens when a *bilek-family* decides to leave one long-house and join another. The act of leaving is conceived of as being fraught with certain dangers for the rest of the community; and as liable to cause a fissure in the fabric of their ritual immunity. Accordingly, Iban *adat* insists that on departing from any long-house, the *bilek-family* concerned, must present the *tuai burong* with a quittance payment, or *pemali rumah*, as it is called. This absolves the family from any responsibility should their departure concur with an outcrop of sickness, or any other serious trouble, in the remaining *bileks* of the long-house. The amount of the quittance payment depends on the time of the year at which the departure takes place. The normal and proper time for moving is during the two or three months that elapse between the end of harvest, and the beginning of felling and planting. During this period the quittance payment is small: *sipi kuna* (*i.e.* $2), a small jar (*tagok*), and one fowl (which is sacrificed, if trouble ensues). After the commencement of a new agricultural cycle however, it becomes much heavier, for there is then a possibility that departure will injuriously affect the growing *padi* of the entire community. In this instance the quittance payment must consist of: *mungkal lapan* ($8), an adze (*bliong*), a war-knife (*nyabor*), and a sacrificial pig. In fact, irregular departure (*i.e.* after the planting of *padi*) is an extremely rare event, and is only likely to occur after severe quarrelling between *bilek-families*.

169. This theme of the ritual unity of the long-house community finds expression in many other fields of activity. For example, when a death occurs the whole community is affected; all farm work is abandoned for three days, and numerous mourning prohibitions come into force immediately after the burial. These, on pain of fine, must be observed by all members of the house, during a period which lasts for about one to two weeks. Again, during and following certain of the ceremonies performed by spirit-mediums, or *manangs*, all the members of the long-house become responsible for obeying prohibitions (*pemali*), which may have their origin in only one or two *bilek-families*. Thus, for three days after the ritual slaying of an *antu buyo* (a malignant spirit held to be responsible for the death of infants), no-one may bring any plant or other living thing into the long-house, for this is symbolical of the re-birth of the dreaded spirit; nor may anyone enter the long-house after dark, as an *antu buyo* is wont to do when seeking his victims. In both cases the penalty is a heavy one (*i.e.* equal to the spirit-medium's fee, which may be as much as $20), and a claim that the prohibition was broken unwittingly gives no reprieve. Similarly, when a woman is giving birth, or during the treatment of cotton with mordants prior to dyeing (*i.e.* the *ngar* process), and on many other ritual occasions, no stranger may enter any part of the long-house. On these occasions it is usual to display some kind of banner, announcing that the long-house is under ritual interdiction—indeed, the long-house is rather like a ship under quarantine. Thus, Iban always take the precaution of asking for permission, before they enter a strange long-house. The customary phrase is: "Can we climb here?" ("Tau nki ditu?"); uttered at the foot of the *tangga*. If space permitted, many additional examples could be given, but for our present purposes, sufficient evidence has been adduced to show that magico-religious concepts play a major part in uniting a long-house community under the general surveillance of their *tuai burong*. And, as we shall see presently, the *tuai burong* is also a key figure in the organization of the foremost rites of the agricultural cycle.

The Long-House as a Local Group.

170. Finally, there is the important factor of local association. *Bilek-families*, we have stressed, have a great measure of autonomy, but they do all live under a single roof, and a long-house, with its open gallery, provides an unusually favourable milieu for social life. It has indeed something of the atmosphere of a 'boulevard'. At nightfall, when lamps are gleaming up and down its length, strolling men gather in casual groups to sit and smoke, chew betal, and discuss together the happenings of the day. And the evening meal over, a score or more may assemble—the women with their weaving—to listen to some visitor chant one of the traditional *ngas* (*enseru*), telling of the miraculous feats of Iban culture heroes and demi-gods, like Kling and Bungai Nuing. On the *ruai*, something is always happening; it is the place where, after the harvest, *padi* is threshed, and where, day by day, the women pound and winnow their grain; it is the place where guests are welcomed and disputes settled, it is the place where shrines are set up and elaborate rituals enacted; it is the public stage for a multitude of tasks from the most mundane to the most sacrosanct. The *ruai* of a long-house has always some excitement or interest to offer, and Iban men say that on their travels, it is the animated and convivial atmosphere of the *ruai* which they most miss.

171. Within a long-house there is little privacy, its members enter one another's apartments without knocking; an altercation can be heard three or four doors away; the most intimate details of family life are liable to become the subject of public discussion. It is all this which gives life in a long-house its peculiar flavour. Every day brings a crop of new happenings to titivate popular interest. Every community has its 'characters' whose idiosyncrasies and foibles absorb and delight. Life in a long-house is a constant divertissement, and, say the Iban, the longer the house the better. Understandably, an Iban cherishes strong sentiments of affection and loyalty for his local community, for it contains not only his personal family, but also his closest kin and firmest friends: the people with whom he is at home. Local association does much therefore to produce a sense of solidarity within the long-house, and to bind its members together in amity and concord.

Summary and Conclusion.

172. To conclude, let us briefly summarize the salient features of Iban social structure. The *tribe*, we may say, is a diffuse territorial grouping dispersed along the banks of a major river and its diverging tributaries. Formerly, it was a grouping whose members did not take one another's heads, but with pacification and the abandonment of head-hunting, tribal boundaries have become blurred. The tribe is still a predominantly endogamous group however, and is intricately reticulated by ties of bilateral kinship. A tribe is perhaps best described then, as an inter-locking aggregation of kindreds, and in the widest sense all its members are kith and kin, of common, albeit remote ancestory.

173. Next to be distinguished is the *long-house community* which is also primarily a territorial entity. But, between the *bilek-families* of which a long-house is composed, there is always a high degree of inter-relatedness. A long-house community may be defined, therefore, as a local confederation of *bilek-families*, based on cognatic kinship. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that every long-house contains a core-group (comprising from about one-third to one-half of the total community) with complete inter-relatedness. This core-group of close cognatic kin, always includes the founding families of the long-house, and its members are major land-holders, and the most influential persons in the community. Clustered about the core-group and all linked to it by bilateral ties of varying degree are the other *bilek-families*. Marriage within the long-house, occurs to a marked extent, so that as kinship ties are augmented and extended, the several initial kindreds of a long-house gradually coalesce. The custom of adoption has a similar effect. Nevertheless, a long-house community is always, to some extent, an arbitary alliance, for its component *bilek-families* possess kin in many other long-houses, and they can become members of any of these other settlements should they so desire. There is, indeed a good deal of movement from one long-house to another. In a pioneer region, like the Baleh, for example, where land is still in fairly abundant supply, few long-houses maintain the same combination of *bilek-families* for more than a year or two. In general, the core-group is stable, but it occasionally happens that a long-house breaks up completely, its component families dispersing to as many as six or more separate, and widely scattered destinations. Such instances of disintegration, offer striking evidence of the conditional nature of group formation among the Iban, and demonstrate that in joining a long-house a *bilek-family* does not sacrifice its essential autonomy.

174. However, whenever a *bilek-family* does change its place of abode, it always seeks out a long-house in which close kinsfolk are already living. Usually there are at least several alternatives, for the framework of long-house organization is bilateral kinship, and it is recognized that cognatic ties, whether they be traced from natal, adopted, or affinal members of the *bilek-family*, are of equal value. This means that a family is free to join any long-house in which there are close kin of either husband or wife, or of both of them.

175. The long-house, it is important to realize, holds virtually no property in communal ownership, nor is there collective ownership of land. Again, there is an absence of any kind of economic activity by the long-house as a corporate group. However, membership of a long-house does impose upon a *bilek-family* innumerable duties and obligations, for it is universally accepted that the well-being of any community is dependant upon its ritual state, and for the maintaining of this, all are responsible. Thus, joining a long-house always involves ritual incorporation. Further, the ritual affairs of any one *bilek* are the indefeasible concern of all the other members of the community. Failure to observe the prohibitions, or other conditions, which any family imposes on the rest of the long-house, for ritual reasons, is a delict and the transgressor is auto-

matically fined. Both the prohibitions and the penalties are fully prescribed in the *adat*, or customary law of the Iban. General responsibility for preserving the ritual well-being of a long-house rests with its *tuai burong*, or augur, who also performs the important task of taking auguries for the community as a whole.

176. Every long-house also has a *tuai rumah*, or headman, whose principal duty is the safeguarding and administering of the customary law. As with the *tuai burong*, any cognate may succeed to this title, but it is usual for both positions to be held by male members of the core-group of founding *bilek-families*. To-day, the *tuai rumah* is accepted as the official intermediary between his community and the British administration, and Government has conferred upon him limited magisterial powers. Thus, in jural, as well as in ritual matters, the long-house community is a corporate group, for all its *bilek-families* willingly place themselves under the jurisdiction of their *tuai rumah*.

177. Finally, we come to the intrinsic and irreducible, corporate groups of Iban society—its *bilek-families*. These economically self-sufficient, allodial units, are essentially autonomous, and have a prescriptive right to decide the whereabouts of their place of abode. This means that the Iban long-house community is an open and not a closed group, for its component *bilek-families* are joined in free association, from which withdrawal is always permissible. At bottom, therefore, a long-house consists of a federation of independent families, whose privately owned apartments have been built side by side to produce a single, attenuated structure. An appreciation of this basic fact is imperative to the proper understanding of Iban social organization. From the outset, a long-house must be conceived of, not as a unified group, but rather as a territorial aggregation of discrete units: not as a communal pavilion, but as a street of privately owned, semi-detached houses. Within the long-house all *bilek-families* are at parity with one another. Differentiation in terms of wealth and influence, there always is, subordination, there certainly is not. Jurally each *bilek-family* is a power unto itself, managing its own affairs and acknowledging no other family to be its superior, or master. Thus, while a long-house is multipartite, it is without trace of any kind of hierarchical, or hegemonic organization. Under Iban *adat* all men are equals. During his lifetime a man may acquire high prestige and become an honoured leader, but rank is not inheritable, and there is no institution of chieftainship. Iban society is classless and egalitarian —and its members, untrammelled individualists, aggressive and proud in demeanour, lacking any taste for obeisance.

(2)
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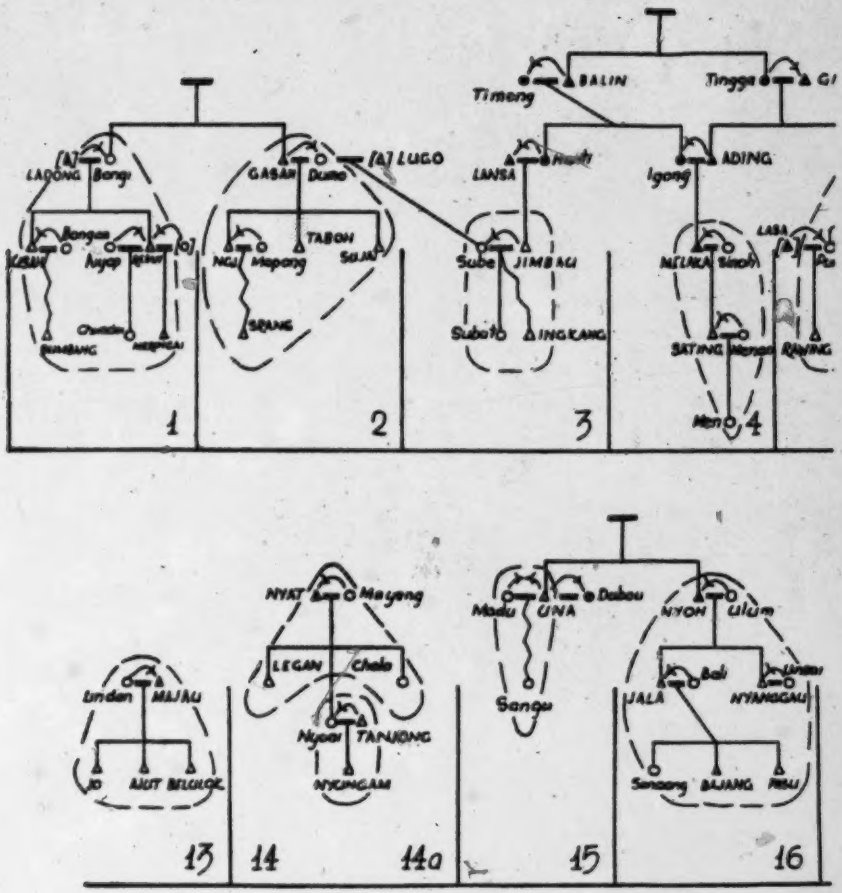

[p. 54(A)]

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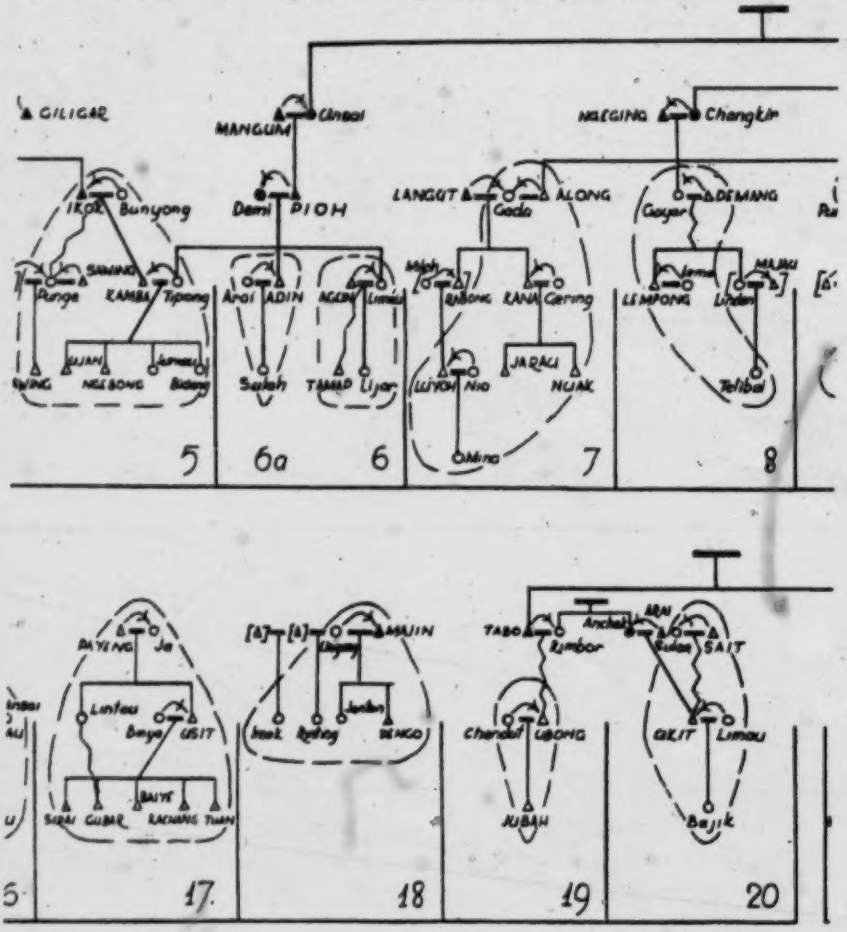
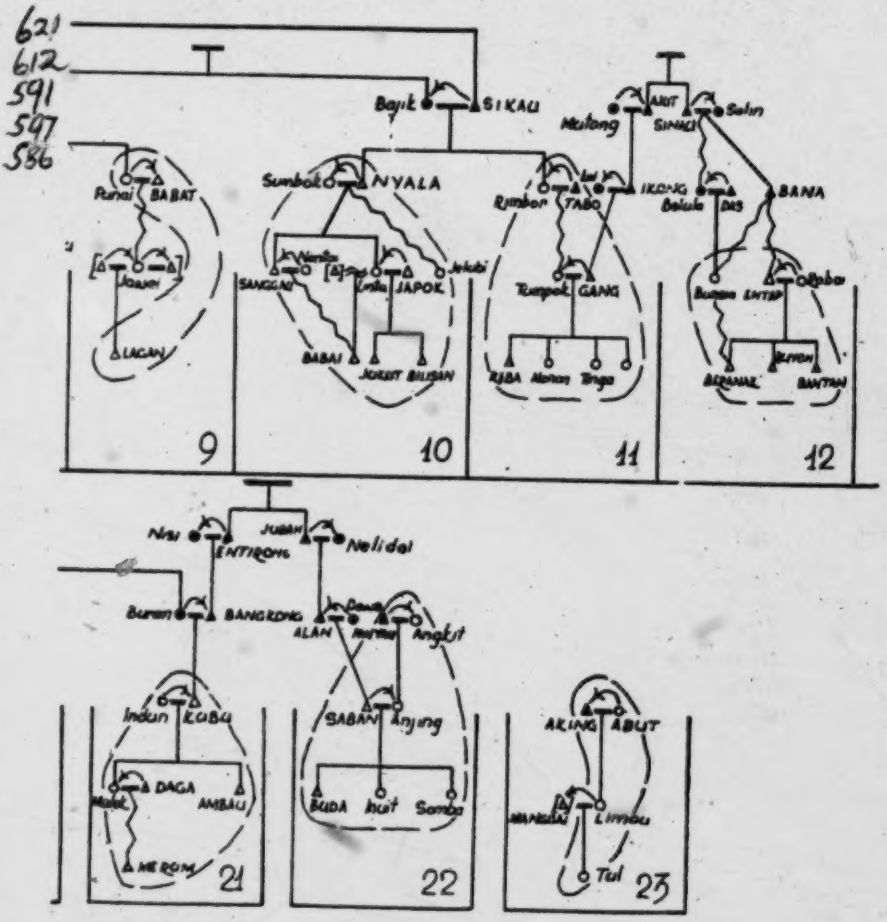


[p.54(B)]

15: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1955 OC6 Iban OC6



[p.54(C)]

Figure 3.

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J97
J91
J86

Kinship Composition of the Bilek-Families of Rumah Nyala, Sungai Set, as on 1st. May, 1950.

Key to Symbols:

Living male ..... △

Dead male ..... ▲

Virilocal marriage ..... ○═△

Adoption ..... ≀

Living female ..... ○

Dead female ..... ●

Uxorilocal marriage ..... ○ △

Divorced person ..... [△] or [○]

Broken line encloses *bilek-family* members as on 1st May, 1950....

Numbers (1-23) refer to bilek-family apartments (c.f. Figure 2, p. 34).

[p. 54 (D)]

15: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1955 OC6 Iban OC6

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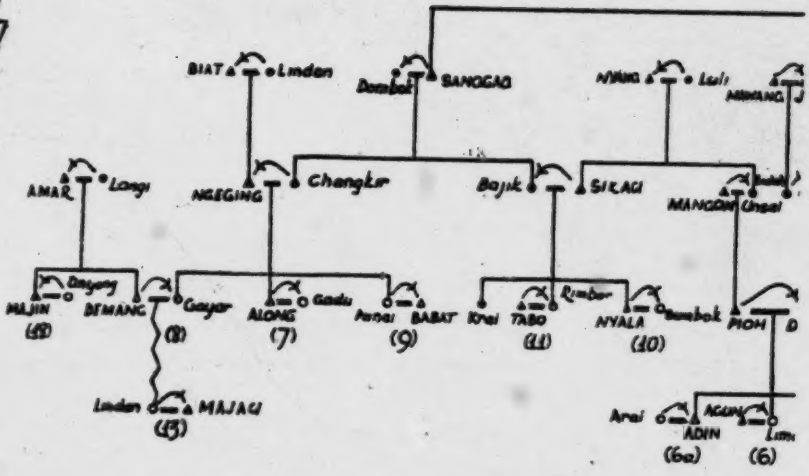
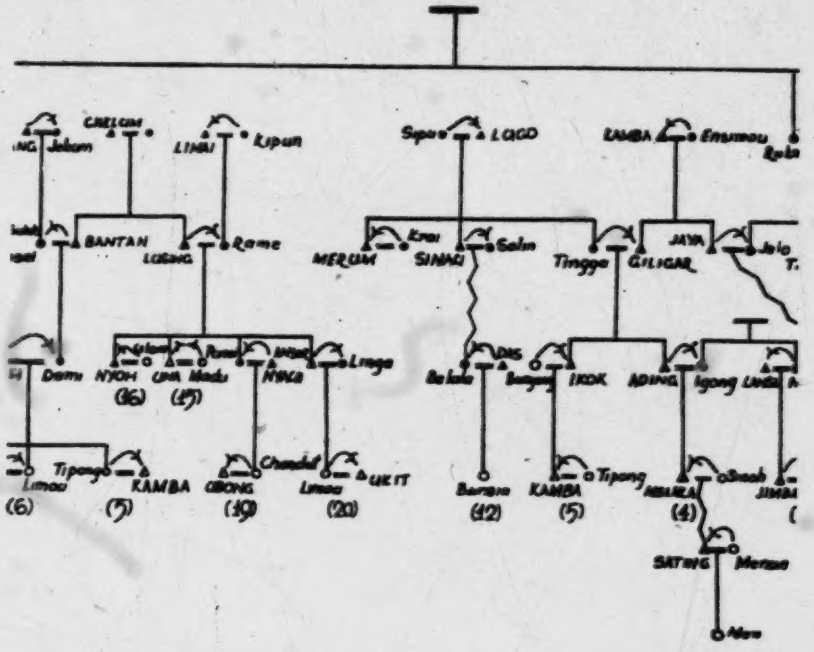


p.54(E)

15: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1955 OC6 Iban OC6



[p. 54(F)]

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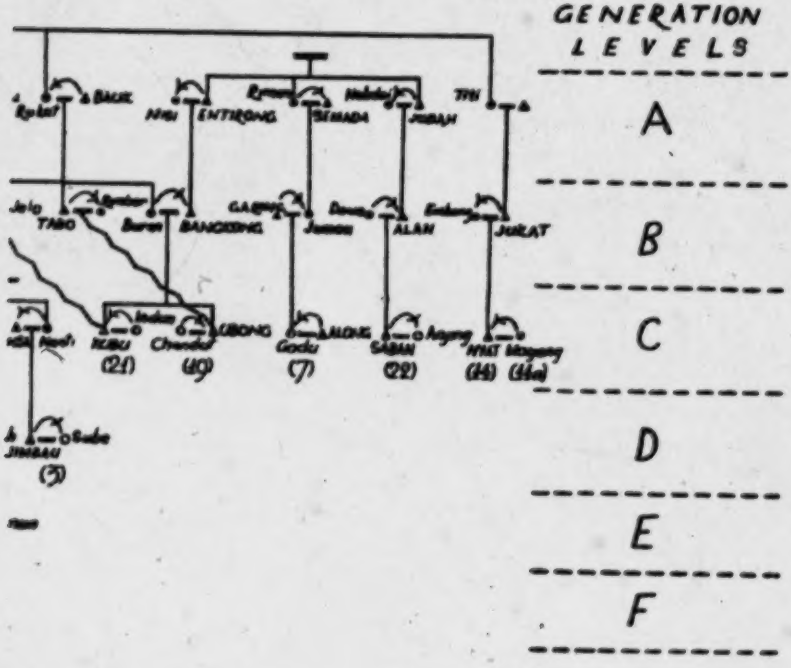

[p.54(G)]

15: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1955 OC6 Iban OC6

Figure 4

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197

Genealogy Showing the Principal Relationships Existing among Twenty-One of the Bilek-Families of Rumah Nyala, Sungai Sut.

Key to Symbols:

Living male .....

Living female .....

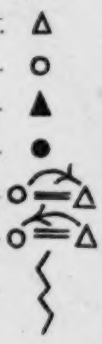
Dead male .....

Dead female .....

Virilocal marriage .....

Uxorilocal marriage .....

Adoption .....



The numbers in brackets refer to bilek-family apartments in the main long-house—as on 1st May, 1950 (c.f. Figure 2, p. 34).

[p. 54(H)]